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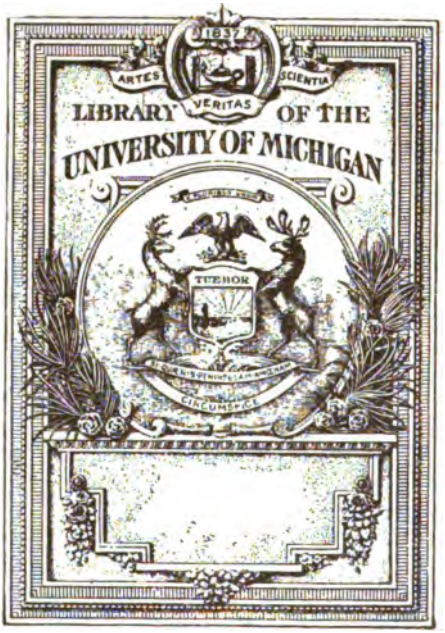
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"'I HAPPENED TO BE AT THE STAGE DOOR AGAIN WHEN SHE CAME OUT WITH HER MAID.'"

(*See Page 271.*)

TALES FROM BOHEMIA

By
ROBERT
NEILSON
STEPHENS

Author of "An Enemy to the King," "Philip Winwood," etc.

Illustrated by WALLACE GOLDSMITH

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ROBERT NEILSON STEPHENS

A MEMORY

One crisp evening early in March, 1887, I climbed the three flights of rickety stairs to the fourth floor of the old "Press" building to begin work on the "news desk." Important as the telegraph department was in making the newspaper, the desk was a crude piece of carpentry. My companions of the blue pencil irreverently termed it "the shelf." This was my second night in the novel dignity of editorship. Though my rank was the humblest, I appreciated the importance of a first step from "the street." An older man, the senior on the news desk, had preceded me. He was engaged in a bantering conversation with a youth who lolled at such ease as a well-worn, cane-bottomed screw-chair afforded. The older man made an informal introduction, and I learned that the youth with pale face and serene smile was "Mr. Stephens, private secretary to the managing editor." That information scarcely

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impressed me any more than it would now after more than twenty years' experience of managing editors and their private secretaries.

The bantering continued, and I learned that the youth cherished literary aspirations, and that he performed certain work in connection with the dramatic department for the managing editor, who kept theatrical news and criticisms within his personal control.

Suddenly a chance remark broke the ice for a friendship between the young man and me which was to last unbroken until his untimely death. Stephens wrote the Isaac Pitman phonography! Here had I been for more than three years wondering to find the shorthand writers of wide-awake and progressive America floundering in what I conceived to be the Serbonian bog of an archaic system of stenography. Unexpectedly a most superior young man came within my ken who was a disciple of Isaac Pitman. Furthermore, like myself, he was entirely self taught. No old shorthand writer who can look back a quarter of a century on his own youthful enthusiasm for the art can fail to appreciate what a bond of sympathy this discovery constituted. From that night forward we were chosen friends, confiding our ambitions to each other, discussing the grave

issues of life and death, settling the problems of literature. Notwithstanding his more youthful appearance, my seniority in age was but slight. Gradually "Bob," as all his friends called him with affectionate informality, was given opportunities to advance himself, under the kindly yet firm guidance of the managing editor, Mr. Bradford Merrill. That gentleman appreciated the distinct gifts of his young protégé, journalistic and literary, and he fostered them wisely and well. I remember perfectly the first criticism of an important play which "Bob" was permitted to write unaided. It was Richard Mansfield's initial appearance in Philadelphia as "Dr. Jekyl and Mr. Hyde," at the Chestnut Street Theatre on Monday, October 3, 1887.

After the paper had gone to press, and while Mr. Merrill and a few of the telegraph editors were partaking of a light lunch, the night editor, the late R. E. A. Dorr, asked Mr. Merrill "how Stephens had made out."

"He has written a very clever and very interesting criticism," Mr. Merrill replied. "I had to edit it somewhat, because he was inclined to be Hugoesque and melodramatic in describing the action with very short sentences. But I am very much pleased, indeed."

That was the beginning of Bob's career as a dramatic critic, a career in which he gained authority and in which his literary faculties, his felicity of expression and soundness of judgment found adequate scope.

In the following two or three years the cultivation of the field of dramatic criticism occupied his time to the temporary exclusion of his ambition for creative work. He and I read independently; but our tastes had much in common, though his preference was for imaginative literature. Meanwhile I was writing short stories with plenty of plot, some of which found their way into various magazines; but his taste lay more in the line of the French short story writers who made an incident the medium for portraying a character. Historical romance had fascinations for me, but Alphonse Daudet attracted both of us to the artistic possibilities that lay in selecting the romance of real life for treatment in fiction as against the crude and repellent naturalism of Zola and his school. This fact is not a little significant in view of the turn toward historical romance which exercised all the activities of Robert Neilson Stephens after the production of his play, "An Enemy to the King," by E. H. Sothern.

Still our intimacy had prepared me for the change. Through many a long night after working hours we had wandered through the moonlit streets until daybreak exchanging views freely and sturdily on historical characters on the philosophy of history, on the character of Henry of Navarre and his followers, and on the worthies of Elizabethan England, in the literature of which we had immersed ourselves. Kipling had recently burst meteor-like on the world, and Barrie raised his head with a whimsical smile closely chasing a tear. Thomas Hardy was in the saddle writing "Tess," and in France Daudet was yet active though his prime was past. Guy de Maupassant continued the production of his marvellous short stories. These were the contemporary prose writers who engaged our attention. A little later we hailed the appearance of Stanley J. Weyman with "A Gentleman of France," and the Conan Doyle of "The White Company" and "Micah Clarke" rather than the creator of "Sherlock Holmes" commended our admiration. We were by no means in accord on the younger authors. Diversity of opinion stimulates critical discussion, however. I had not yet become reconciled to Kipling, who provoked my resentment by certain

coarse flings at the Irish, but " Bob " hailed him with whole-hearted enthusiasm.

We were not the only members of the staff with literary aspirations. Others, like the late Andrew E. Watrous, had achievements of no mean order in prose and verse. Still others were sustaining the traditions of " The Press " as a newspaper office which throughout its history had been a stepping stone to magazine work and other forms of literary employment. Richard Harding Davis was on the paper and " Bob " Stephens was one of the two men most intimately in his confidence regarding his ambitions.

Finally Bob told me that " Dick " had taken him to his house and read to him " A bully short story," adding, " It's a corker."

I inquired the nature of the story.

" Just about the ' Press ' office," Bob replied.

Among other particulars I asked the title.

" ' Gallegher,' " said Bob.

Three years elapsed after our first acquaintance before Bob Stephens began writing stories and sketches. The " Tales from Bohemia " collected in this volume represent his early creative work. We were in the better sense a small band of Bohemians, the few friends and companions who will be found figuring in the tales under one guise

or another. Many a merry prank and many a jest is recalled by these pages. Of criticism I have no word to say. Let the reader understand how they came into being and they will explain themselves. " Bob " Stephens took his own environment, the anecdotes he heard, the persons whom he met and the friends whom he knew, and he treated them as the writers of short stories in France twenty years ago treated their own Parisian environment. He made an incident the means of illustrating a portrayal of character. Later he was to construct elaborate plots for dramas and historical novels.

" Bohemianism " was but a brief episode in the life of " R. N. S." It ceased after his marriage. But his natural gaiety remained. Seldom was his joyous disposition overcast, or his winning smile eclipsed. For six months I was privileged to live in the house with his mother. If he had inherited his literary predilections from his father, —a highly respected educator of Huntington, Pa., from whose academy many eminent professional men were graduated,— his gentleness, his cheerfulness, his winning smile and the ingratiating qualities to which it was the key, as surely came from his mother.

I remember a time when he was inordinately grave for several days and pursued a tireless

course of special reading through the office encyclopædias and some books he had borrowed. At last he drew aside the veil of reserve which concealed his family affairs from even his closest friends and inquired if I could direct him to any recent authority on cancer. I divined the sad truth that his tenderly beloved mother was suffering from the dread disease. That was the day before serums, and nothing that he found to read in books or periodicals gave him a faint hope that his dear one could be cured. Thenceforward, mother and son awaited the inevitable end with uncomplaining patience which was characteristic of both. His cheerful smile returned, and while the blow of bereavement was impending practically all these "Tales from Bohemia" were written.

To follow the career of "R. N. S." and trace his development after he gave up newspaper work in the fall of 1893 is not required in this place. "Tales from Bohemia" will be found interesting in themselves, apart from the fact that they illustrate another phase of the literary gift of a young writer who contributed so materially to the entertainment of playgoers and novel readers for a period of ten years after the work in this book was all done.

J. O. G. D.

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THE ONLY GIRL HE EVER LOVED

TALES FROM BOHEMIA

I

THE ONLY GIRL HE EVER LOVED

WHEN Jack Morrow returned from the World's Fair, he found Philadelphia thermometers registering 95. The next afternoon he boarded a Chestnut Street car, got out at Front Street, hurried to the ferry station, and caught a just departing boat for Camden, and on arriving at the other side of the Delaware, made haste to find a seat in the well-filled express train bound for Atlantic City.

While he was being whirled across the level surface of New Jersey, past the cornfields and short stretches of green trees and restful cottage towns, he thought of the pleasure in store for him — the meeting with the young person whom he had gradually come to consider the loveliest girl in

the world. Having neglected to read the list of "arrivals" in the newspapers, he knew not at what hotel she and her aunt were staying. But he would soon make the rounds of the large beach hotels, at one of which she was likely to be found.

She did not expect to see him. Therefore her first expression on beholding him would betray her feelings toward him, whatever they were. Should the indication be favourable, he would propose to her at the first opportunity, on beach, boardwalk, hotel piazza, pavilion, yacht or in the surf. Such were the meditations of Jack Morrow while the train roared across New Jersey to the sea.

The first sign of the flat green meadows, the smooth waters of the thoroughfare, the sails afar at the inlet and the long side of the sea-city stretching out against the sky at the very end of the earth is refreshing and exhilarating to any one. It gave a doubly keen enjoyment to Jack Morrow.

"Within an hour, perhaps," he mused, as the reviving odour of the salt water touched his nostrils, "I shall see Edith."

When with the crowd he had made his way out of the train, and traversed the long platform

at the Atlantic City station, ignoring the stentorian solicitations of the 'bus drivers, he started walking toward the ocean promenade, invited by the glimpse of sea at the far end of the avenue. Thus he crossed that wide thoroughfare — Atlantic Avenue — with its shops and trolley-cars; passed picturesque hotels and cottages; crossed Pacific Avenue where carriages and dog-carts were being driven rapidly between the rows of pretty summer edifices, and traversed the famously long block that ends at the boardwalk and the strand.

He succeeded in getting a third-floor room on the ocean side of the first hotel where he applied. He learned from the clerk that Edith was not at this house. Sea air having revived his appetite, he decided to dine before setting out in search of her.

When, after his meal, he reached the boardwalk, the electric lights had already been turned on and the regular evening crowd of promenaders was beginning to form. He strolled along now looking at the beach and the sea, now at the boardwalk crowd where he might perhaps at any moment behold the face of " the loveliest girl in the world." He beheld instead, as he approached the Tennessee pier, the face of his friend George Haddon.

"Hello, old boy!" exclaimed Morrow, grasping his friend's hand. "What are you doing here? I thought your affairs would keep you in New York all summer."

"So they would," replied Haddon, in a tone and with a look whose distress he made little effort to conceal. "But something happened."

"Why, what on earth's the matter? You seem horribly downcast."

Haddon was silent for a moment; then he said suddenly:

"I'll tell you all about it. I have to tell somebody or it will split my head. But come out on the pier, away from the noise of that merry-go-round organ."

Neither spoke as the two young men passed through the concert pavilion and dancing hall out to a quieter part of the long pier. They sat near the railing and looked out over the sea, on which, as evening fell, the rippling band of moonlight grew more and more luminous. They could see, at the right, the long line of brilliant lights on the boardwalk, and the increasing army of promenaders. Detached from the furthest end of the line of boardwalk lights, shone those of distant Longport. Above these, the sky had turned from heliotrope to hues dark and indefinable,

but indescribably beautiful. Down on the beach were only a few people, strolling near the tide line, a carriage, a man on horseback, and three frolicking dogs.

"It's simply this," abruptly began Haddon. "Six weeks ago I was married to —"

"Why, I never heard of it. Let me congrat—"

"No, don't, I was married to a comic opera singer, named Lulu Ray. I don't suppose you've ever heard of her, for she was only recently promoted from the chorus to fill small parts. We took a flat, and lived happily on the whole, for a month, although with such small quarrels as might be expected. Two weeks ago she went out and didn't come back. Since then I haven't been able to find her in New York or at any of the resorts along the Jersey coast. I suppose she was offended at something I said during a quarrel that grew out of my insisting on our staying in New York all summer. Knowing her liking for Atlantic City — she was a Philadelphia girl before she went on the stage — I came here at once to hunt her up and apologize and agree to her terms."

"Well?"

"Well, I haven't found her. She's not at any hotel in Atlantic City. I'm going back to New

York to-morrow to get some clue as to where she is."

"I suppose you're very fond of her still?"

"Yes; that's the trouble. And then, of course, a man doesn't like to have a woman who bears his name going around the country alone, her whereabouts unknown."

Morrow was on the point of saying: "Or perhaps with some other man," but he checked himself. He was sufficiently mundane to refrain from attempting to reason Haddon out of his affection for the fugitive, or to advise him as to what to do. He knew that in merely letting Haddon unburden on him the cause of anxiety, he had done all that Haddon would expect from any friend.

He limited himself, therefore, to reminding Haddon that all men have their annoyances in this life; to treating the woman's offence as light and commonplace, and to cheering him up by making him join in seeing the sights of the boardwalk.

They looked on at the pier hop, while Professor Willard's musicians played popular tunes; returned to the boardwalk and watched the pretty girls leaning against the wooden beasts on the merry-go-round while the organ screamed forth,

"Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Bow Wow;" experienced that not very illusive illusion known as "The Trip to Chicago;" were borne aloft on an observation wheel; made the rapid transit of the toboggan slide, visited the phonographs and heard a shrill reproduction of "Molly and I and the Baby;" tried the slow and monotonous ride on the "Figure Eight," and the swift and varied one on the switchback. They bought salt-water taffy and ate it as they passed down the boardwalk and looked at the moonlight. Down on the Bowery-like part of the boardwalk they devoured hot sausages, and in a long pavilion drank passable beer and saw a fair variety show. Thence they left the boardwalk, walked to Atlantic Avenue and mounted a car that bore them to Shauffler's, where among light-hearted beer drinkers they heard the band play "Sousa's Cadet March" and "After the Ball," and so they arrived at midnight.

All this was beneficial to Haddon and pleasant enough in itself, but it prevented Morrow that night from prosecuting his search for the loveliest girl in the world. He postponed the search to the next day. And when that time came, after Haddon had started for New York, occurred an

event that caused Morrow to postpone the search still further.

He had decided to go up the boardwalk on the chance of seeing Edith in a pavilion or on the beach. If he should reach the vicinity of the lighthouse without finding her, he would turn back and inquire at every hotel near the beach until he should obtain news of her.

He had reached Pennsylvania Avenue when he was attracted by the white tents that here dotted the wide beach. He went down the high flight of steps from the boardwalk to rest awhile in the shade of one of the tents.

Although it was not yet 11 o'clock, several people in bathing suits were making for the sea. A little goat wagon with children aboard was passing the tents, and after it came the cart of the "hokey-pokey" peddler, drawn by a donkey that wore without complaint a decorated straw bathing hat. Morrow, looking at the feet of the donkey, saw in the sand something that shone in the sunlight. He picked it up and found that it was a gold bracelet studded with diamonds.

He questioned every near-by person without finding the owner. He therefore put the bracelet in his pocket, intending to advertise it. Then

he resumed his stroll up the boardwalk. He went past the lighthouse and turned back.

He had reached the Tennessee Avenue pier without having found the loveliest girl in the world. His eye caught a small card that had just been tacked up at the pier entrance. Approaching it he read:

"Lost — On the beach between Virginia and South Carolina Avenues, a gold bracelet with seven diamonds. A liberal reward will be paid for its recovery at the ——— Hotel."

The hotel named was the one at which Morrow was staying. He hurried thither.

"Who lost the diamond bracelet?" he asked the clerk.

"That young lady standing near the elevator. Miss Hunt, I think her name is," said the clerk consulting the register. "Yes, that's it, she only arrived last night."

Morrow saw standing near the elevator door, a lithe, well-rounded girl with brown hair and great gray eyes that were fixed on him. She was in the regulation summer-girl attire — blue Eton suit, pink shirtwaist, sailor hat, and russet shoes. He hastened to her.

"Miss Hunt, I have the honour to return your bracelet."

She opened her lips and eyes with pleasurable surprise and reached somewhat eagerly for the piece of jewelry.

"Thank you ever so much. I took a walk on the beach just after breakfast and dropped it somewhere. It's too large."

"I picked it up near Pennsylvania Avenue. It's a curious coincidence that it should be found by some one stopping at the same hotel. But, pardon me, you're going away without mentioning the reward."

She looked at him with some surprise, until she discovered that he was jesting. Then she smiled a smile that gave Morrow quite a pleasant thrill, and said, with some tenderness of tone:

"Let the reward be what you please."

"And that will be to do what you shall please to have me do."

"Ah, that's nice. Then I accept your services at once. I am quite alone here; haven't any acquaintances in the hotel. I want to go bathing and I'm rather timid about going alone, although I'd made up my mind to do so and was just going up after my bathing suit."

"Then I am to have the happiness of escorting you into the surf."

They went bathing together not far from where

he had found the bracelet. He discovered that she could swim as well as he; also that in her dark blue bathing costume, with sailor collar and narrow white braid, she was a most shapely person.

She laughed frequently while they were breasting the breakers; and afterwards, as in their street attire they were returning on the boardwalk, she chatted brightly with him, revealing a certain cleverness in off-hand persiflage.

He took her into the tent behind the observation wheel to see the Egyptian exhibition, and she was good enough to laugh at his jokes about the mummies, although the mummies did not seem to interest her. Further down the boardwalk they stopped at the Japanese exhibition, and on the way out he caught himself saying that if it were possible, he would take great pleasure in hauling her in a jinrikisha.

"I'll remember that promise and make you push me in a wheel-chair," she answered.

When they were back at the hotel, she turned suddenly and said:

"By the way, what's your name? Mine's Clara Hunt."

He told her, and while she went up the elevator with her bathing suit, he arranged with the head waiter to have himself seated at her table.

He learned from the clerk that she had arrived alone with a letter of introduction from a former guest of the house, and intended to stay at least a fortnight.

At luncheon he proposed that they should take a sail in the afternoon. She said, with a smile:

"As it is you who invites me, I'll give up my nap and go."

They rode in a 'bus to the Inlet, and after spending half an hour drinking beer and listening to the band on the pavilion, they hired a skipper to take them out in his catboat. Six miles out the boat pitched considerably and Miss Hunt increased her hold on Morrow's admiration by not becoming seasick. At his suggestion they cast out lines for bluefish. She borrowed mittens from the captain and pulled in four fish in quick succession.

"What an athletic woman you are," said Morrow.

"Yes, indeed."

"In fact, everything that's charming," he continued.

She replied softly: "Don't say that unless you mean it. It pleases me too much, coming from you."

Morrow mused: "Here's a girl who is frank

enough to say so when she likes a fellow. It makes her all the more fascinating, too. Some women would make me very tired throwing themselves at me this way. But it is different with her."

They gave the fish to the captain and returned from the Inlet by the Atlantic Avenue trolley, just in time for dinner. She did not lament her lack of opportunity to change her clothes for dinner, nor did she complain about the coat of sunburn she had acquired.

In the evening, they sat together for a time on the pier, took a turn together at one of the waltzes, although neither cared much for dancing at this time of year, walked up the boardwalk and compared the moon with the high beacon light of the lighthouse.

He bought her marshmallows at a confectioner's booth, a fan at a Japanese store, and a queer oriental paper cutter at a Turkish bazaar. They took two switchback rides, during which he was compelled to put his arm around her. Finally, reluctant to end the evening, they stood for some minutes leaning against the boardwalk railing, listening to the moan of the sea and watching the shaft of moonlight stretching from beach to horizon.

It was not until he was alone in his room that

Morrow bethought of his neglect of the loveliest girl in the world. And remorseful as he was, he did not form any distinct intention of resuming his search for her the next day. He rather congratulated himself on not having met her while he was with this enchanting Clara Hunt.

And he passed next day also with the enchanting Clara Hunt. They sat on the piazza together reading different parts of the same newspaper for an hour after breakfast; went to the boardwalk and turned in at a shuffle-board hall, where they spent another hour making the weights slide along the sanded board and then took another ocean bath.

After luncheon they walked up the boardwalk to the iron pier.

Seeing the lifeboat there, rising and falling in the waves, Clara asked:

"Would the lifeguard take us in his boat for a while, I wonder?"

Morrow went down to the beach and shouted to the lifeguard, who was none other than the robust and stentorian Captain Clark. The captain brought the boat ashore and as there were no bathers in the water at this point, he agreed to row the young people out to the end of the pier.

"This is a great place for brides and grooms

this summer," remarked the captain in his frank and jocular way.

Clara looked at Morrow with a blush and a laugh. Morrow was pleased at seeing that she seemed not displeased.

" We're not married," said Morrow to the captain.

" Not yet, mebbe," said the captain with one of his significant winks, and then he gave vent to loud and long laughter.

That evening Morrow and Clara took the steamer trip from the Inlet to Brigantine and the ride on the electric car along flat and sandy Brigantine beach. On the return, they became very sentimental. They decided to walk all the way from the Inlet down the boardwalk. He found himself quite oblivious to the crowd of promenaders. The loveliest girl in the world might have passed him a dozen times without attracting his attention. He had eyes and ears for none but Clara Hunt.

And that night, far from reproaching himself for his conduct toward the loveliest girl, etc., he hardly thought of her at all, more than to wonder by what good fortune he had avoided meeting her. Some of the people at their hotel made the same mistake regarding Morrow and

Clara as Captain Clark had made; the two were seen constantly together. Others thought they were engaged.

Morrow spoke of this to her next morning as they were being whirled down to Longport on a trolley car along miles of smooth beach and stunted distorted pine trees. "I heard a woman on the piazza whisper that I was your fiancé," he said.

"Well, what if you were — I mean what if she did?"

At Longport they took the steamer for Ocean City. They rode through that quiet place of trees and cottages on the electric car, returning to the landing just in time to miss the 11.50 boat for Longport. They had to wait an hour and a half and they were the only people there who were not bored by the delay. They returned by way of Somers' Point.

While the boat was gliding through the sunlit waters of Great Egg Harbour Inlet, Clara's hand happened to fall on Morrow's, which was resting on the gunwale. She let her hand remain there. Morrow looked at it, and then at her face. She smiled. When the Italian violin player on the boat came that way, Morrow gave him a dollar. Alas for the loveliest girl in the world!

They passed most of that evening in a board-

walk pavilion, ostensibly watching the sea and the crowd. They went up the thoroughfare in a catboat the next morning, and, strange as it seemed to them, were the only people out who caught no fish. The captain winked at his mate, who grinned.

In the afternoon, while Morrow and Clara stood on the boardwalk looking down at the Salvation Army tent, along came that innocent eccentric " Professor " Walters in bathing costume and with his swimming machine. The tall, lean whiskered, loquacious " Professor " had made Morrow's acquaintance in a former summer and now greeted him politely.

" How d'ye do? " said the " Professor." " Glad to see you here. You turn up every year."

" You're still given to rhyming," commented Morrow.

" Yes, I have a rhyme for every time, in pleasure or sorrow. Is this Mrs. Morrow? "

" No."

" You ought to be sorry she isn't," remarked the " Professor," taking his departure.

Morrow and Clara walked on in silence. At last he said somewhat nervously:

" Everybody thinks we're married. Why shouldn't we be? "

She answered softly, with downcast eyes:

"I would be willing if I were sure of one thing."

"What's that?"

"That you have never loved any other woman. Have you?"

"How can you ask? Believe me, you are the only girl I have ever loved."

That evening, after dinner, Morrow and Clara, the newly affianced, about starting from the hotel to the boardwalk, were at the top of the hotel steps when a man appeared at the bottom.

Morrow uttered a cry of recognition.

"Why, Haddon, old boy, I'm glad to see you. Let me introduce you to my wife that is to be."

Haddon stood still and stared. Clara, too, remained motionless. After a moment, Haddon said very quietly:

"You're mistaken. Let me introduce you to my wife that is."

Morrow looked at Clara. She turned her gray eyes fearlessly on Haddon.

"You, too, are mistaken," she said. "I had a husband before you married me. He's my husband still. He's doing a song and dance act in a variety theatre in Chicago. I'm sorry about all this, Mr. Morrow. I really like you. Good-bye."

"'YOU, TOO, ARE MISTAKEN,' SHE SAID."

She ran back into the hotel and arranged to make her departure on an early train next morning.

Haddon turned toward the boardwalk, and Morrow, quite dazed, involuntarily followed him. After a period of silence, Morrow said:

"This is astonishing. A bigamist, and a would-be trigamist. She came here the night before you left. How did you find out she was here?"

"I read it in the Atlantic City letter of *The Philadelphia Press* that one of the Comic Opera singers daily seen on the boardwalk is Miss Clara Hunt, who is known to theatre-goers by her stage name, Lulu Ray. These newspaper correspondents know some of the obscurest people. If I had told you her real name, you would have known who she was in time to have avoided being taken in by her."

"Her having another husband lets you out."

"Yes. I'm glad and sorry, for damn it, I was fond of the girl. Excuse me awhile, old fellow. I want to go on the pier and think awhile."

Haddon went out on the pier and looked down on the incoming waves and thought awhile. He found it a disconsolate occupation, even with a cigar to sweeten it. So he came back and mingled

with the gay crowd on the boardwalk and tried to forget her.

Morrow had no sooner left Haddon than he felt his arm touched. Looking around, he saw the smiling face of the loveliest girl in the world.

"Well, by Jove, Edith," he said. "At last I've found you!"

"Yes. I heard you were down here. You see, I've been up in town for the last week. Gracious, but Philadelphia is hot! Here's Aunt Laura."

Morrow spent the evening with Edith. One night a week later, he proposed to her on the pier.

"I will say yes," she replied, "if you can give me your assurance that you've never been in love with any one else."

"That's easily given. You know very well you're the only girl I've ever loved."

A BIT OF MELODY

II

A BIT OF MELODY[1]

It was twelve o'clock that Sunday night when, leaving the lodging-house for a breath of winter air before going to bed, I met the two musicians coming in, carrying under their arms their violins in cases. They belonged to the orchestra at the ——— Theatre, and were returning from a dress rehearsal of the new comic opera that was to be produced there on the following night.

Schaaf, who entered the hallway in advance of the professor, responded to my greeting in his customary gruff, almost suspicious manner, and passed on, turning down the collar of his overcoat. His heavily bearded face was as gloomy-looking as ever in the light of the single flickering gaslight.

The professor, although by birth a compatriot of the other, was in disposition his opposite. In his courteous, almost affectionate way, he

[1] Copyrighted by J. Brisbane Walker, and used by the courtesy of the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*.

stopped to have a word with me about the coldness of the weather and the danger of the icy pavements. "I'm t'ankful to be at last home," he said, showing his teeth with a cordial smile, as he removed the muffler from his neck, which I thought nature had sufficiently protected with an ample red beard. "Take my advice, my frient, tempt not de wedder. Stay warm in de house andt I play for you de music of de new opera."

"Thanks for your solicitude," I said, "but I must have my walk. Play to your sombre friend, Schaaf, and see if you can soften him into geniality. Good night."

The professor, with his usual kindliness, deprecated my thrust at the taciturnity of his countryman and confrère, with a gesture and a look of reproach in his soft gray eyes, and we parted. I watched him until he disappeared at the first turn of the dingy stairs.

As I passed up the street, where I was in constant peril of losing my footing, I saw his windows grow feebly alight. He had ignited the gas in his room, which was that of the professor's sinister friend Schaaf.

My regard for the professor was born of his invariable goodness of heart. Never did I know him to speak an uncharitable word of any one,

while his practical generosity was far greater than expected of a second violinist. When I commended his magnanimity he would say, with a smile:

"My frient, you mistake altogedder. I am de most selfish man. Charity cofers a multitude of sins. I haf so many sins to cofer."

We called him the professor because besides fulfilling his nightly and matinée duties at the theatre, he gave piano lessons to a few pupils, and because those of us who could remember his long German surname could not pronounce it.

One proof of the professor's beneficence had been his rescue of his friend Schaaf on a bench in Madison Square one day, a recent arrival from Germany, muttering despondently to himself. The professor learned that he had been unable to secure employment, and that his last cent had departed the day before. The professor took him home, clothed him and cared for him until eventually another second violin was needed in the ——— Theatre orchestra.

Schaaf was now on his feet, for he was apt at the making of tunes, and he picked up a few dollars now and then as a composer of songs and waltzes.

All of which has little to do, apparently, with

my post-midnight walk in that freezing weather. As I turned into Broadway, I was surprised to collide with my friend the doctor.

"I came out for a stroll and a bit to eat," I said. "Won't you join me? I know a snug little place that keeps open till two o'clock, where devilled crabs are as good as the broiled oyster."

"With pleasure," he replied, cordially, still holding my hand; "not for your food, but for your society. But do you know what you did when you ran against me at the corner? For a long time I've been trying to recall a certain tune that I heard once. Three minutes ago, as I was walking along, it came back to me, and I was whistling it when you came up. You knocked it quite out of mind. I'm sorry, for interesting circumstances connected with my first hearing of it make it desirable that I should remember it."

"I can never express my regret," I said. "But you may be able to catch it again. Where were you when it came back to you three minutes ago?"

"Two blocks away, passing a church. I think it was the shining of the electric light upon the stained glass window that brought it back to me, for on the night of the day when I first heard it in Paris a strong light was falling upon the stained

glass windows of the church opposite the house in which I had apartments."

"Perhaps, then," I suggested, "the law of association may operate again if you take the trouble to walk back and repass the church in the same manner and the same state of mind, as nearly as you can resume them."

"By Jove," said the doctor, who likes experiments of this kind, "I'll try it. Wait for me here."

I stood at the corner while the doctor briskly retraced his steps. His firmly built, comfortable-looking form passed rapidly away. Within five minutes he was back, a triumphant smile lighting his face.

"Success!" he said. "I have it, although whether from chance or as a result of repeating my impression of light falling on a church window I can't say. Certainly, after all these years, the tune is again mine. Listen."

As we proceeded up the street the doctor whistled a few measures composing a rather peculiar melody, expressive, it seemed to me, of unrest. I never forget a tune I have once heard, and this one was soon fixed in my memory.

"And the interesting circumstances under which you heard it?" I interrogated. "Surely after the concern I've shown in the matter, you're

not going to deprive me of the story that goes with the tune? "

" There is no reason why I should. But I hope you will not circulate the melody. It is the music that accompanies a tragedy."

" Indeed? You have written one, then? It must be brief, as there isn't much of the music."

" I refer to a tragedy which actually occurred. Tragedies in real life are not, as a rule, accompanied by music, and, to be accurate, in this case music preceded the tragedy. Ten years ago, when I was living in Paris, apartments adjoining mine were taken by a musician and his wife. His name, as I learned afterward, was Heinrich Spellerberg, and he came from Breslau. The wife, a very young and pretty creature, showed herself, by her attire and manners, to be frivolous and vain, and without having more than the slightest acquaintance with the pair, I soon learned that she had no knowledge of or taste for music. He had married her, I suppose, for her beauty, and had too late discovered the incompatibility of their temperaments. But he loved her passionately and jealously. One day I heard loud words between them, from which I gathered unintentionally that something had aroused his jealousy. She replied with laughter and taunts to his threats. The quarrel

ended with her abrupt departure from the room and from the house.

"He did not follow her, but sat down at the piano and began to play in the manner of one who improvises. Correcting the melody that first responded to his touch, modifying it at several repetitions, he eventually gave out the form that I have just whistled.

"Evening came and the wife did not return. He continued to play that strain over and over, into the night. I dropped my book, turned down my lamp light, and stood at the window, looking at the church across the way. Suddenly the music ceased. The wife had returned. 'Where did you dine?' I heard him ask. I could not hear her reply, but the next speech was plainly distinguished. 'You lie!' he said, in vehement tone of rage; 'you were with ———.' I did not catch the name he mentioned, nor did I know what she said in answer, or actually what happened. I heard only a confused sound, which did not impress me at the time as indicating a struggle, and which was followed by silence. I imagined that harmony or a sullen truce had been restored in the household, and thought no more about the affair. The next morning the wife was found dead, strangled. The husband had disappeared, and

has never, I believe, been heard of to this day."

We reached the restaurant as the doctor finished his story. How the account had impressed me I need not tell. Seated in the warm café, with appetizing viands and a bottle before us, I asked the doctor to tell me again the husband's name.

"Heinrich Spellerberg."

"And who had the woman been?"

"I never ascertained. She was a vain, insignificant, shallow little blonde. The Paris newspapers could learn nothing as to her antecedents. She, too, was German, but slight and delicate in physique."

"You didn't save any of the newspapers giving accounts of the affair?"

"No. My evidence was printed, but they spelled my name wrong."

"Do you remember the exact date of the murder?"

"Yes, because it was the birthday of a friend of mine. It was February 17, 187–. Twelve years ago! And that tune has been with me, off and on, ever since — forgotten, most of the time; a few times recalled — as to-night."

"And the man, what did he look like?"

"Slim and of medium height. Very light complexion and eyes. His face was entirely smooth. His hair, a bit flaxen in colour, was curly and plentiful, especially about the back of his neck."

"In your evidence did you say anything about the strain of music, which was manifestly of the murderer's own composition?"

"No, it did not recur to me until later."

"And nothing was said about it by anybody?"

"No one but myself knew anything about it — except the murderer; and unless he afterward circulated it, he and you and I are the only men in the world who have heard it."

"But if he continued, wherever he went, to exercise his profession, he doubtless made some use of that bit of melody. The tune is so odd — quite too good for him to have wasted."

"Still, neither of us has ever heard it, or anything like it. And if you ever should come upon it, it would be interesting to trace the thing, wouldn't it?"

"Rather."

I began to whistle the air softly. Presently two handsome girls, with jimp raiment and fearless demeanour, came in and took possession of an adjacent table.

"What'll it be, Nell?"

"I'll take a dozen panned. I'm hungry enough to eat all the oysters that ever came out of the sea. A rehearsal like that gives one an appetite."

"A dozen panned, and lobster salad for me, and two bottles of beer," was the order of the first speaker to the waiter.

I recognized the faces as pertaining to the chorus of the opera company at the ——— Theatre. I stopped whistling while I watched them.

Suddenly, like a delayed and multiplied echo of my own whistling, came in a soft hum from one of the girls the notes of the doctor's tragically associated strain of music.

The doctor and I exchanged glances. The girl stopped humming.

"I think that's the prettiest thing in the piece, Maude," said she.

Undoubtedly it was the comic opera to be produced at the ——— Theatre to which she alluded as "the piece."

"Amazing," I said to the doctor. "Millocker composed the piece she's talking about. Millocker never killed a wife in Paris. Nor would he steal bodily from another. Perhaps the thing has been interpolated by the local producer. It doesn't

sound quite like Millocker, anyhow. I must see about this."

"Where are you going?"

"To the Actors' Club, or a dozen other places, until I find Harry Griffiths. He's one of the comedians in the company at the ——— Theatre, and he has a leading part in that piece to-morrow night. He'll know where that tune came from."

"As you please," said the amiable doctor. "But I must go home. You can tell me the result of your investigation to-morrow. It may lead to nothing, but it will be interesting pastime."

"And again," I said, putting on my overcoat, "it may lead to something. I'll see you to-morrow. Good night."

I found Griffiths at the Actors' Club, telling stories over a mutton-chop and a bottle of champagne. When the opportunity came I drew him aside.

"I have bet with a man about a certain air in the new piece. He says it's in the original score, and I say it's introduced, because I don't think Millocker did it. This is it, and I whistled it."

"Quite right, my boy. It's not in the original. Miss Elton's part was so small that she refused to play until the manager agreed to let her fatten it up. So Weinmann composed that and put — "

"This Weinmann," I interrupted, abruptly, "what do you know about him? Who is he?"

"He's Gustav Weinmann, the new musical director. I don't know anything about him. He's not been long in the country. The manager found him in some small place in Germany last summer."

"How old is he? Where does he live?"

"Somewhat in forty, I should say. I don't know where he stays. If you want to see him, why don't you come to the theatre when he's there?"

"Good idea, this. Good night."

I would look up this German musician who had come from an obscure German town. I would go to him and bluntly say:

"Mr. Weinmann, I beg your pardon, but is it true, as some people say it is, that your real name is Heinrich Spellerberg?"

Meanwhile there was nothing to do but go to bed.

All the way home the tune rang in my head. I whistled it softly as I began to undress, until I heard the sound of the piano in the parlour downstairs. Few of us ever touched that superannuated instrument. The only ones who ever did so intelligently were Schaaf and the professor. The latter was wont to visit the piano at any hour of

the night. We all were used to his way, and we liked the subdued melodies, the dreamy caprices, the vague, trembling harmonies that stole through the silent house.

I never see moonlight stretching its soft glory athwart a darkened room but I hear in fancy the infinitely gentle yetoften thrilling strains that used to float through the still night from the piano as its keys took touch from the delicate white fingers of the professor.

Suddenly the musical summonings of the player assumed a familiar aspect, — that of the tune which I had been singing in my own brain for the past hour.

Then it occurred to me that the professor, being a second violin in the orchestra at the ——— Theatre, would doubtless know more about the antecedents of the new musical director than Griffiths had been able to tell me. This was the more probable as the professor himself had come from Germany.

I descended the stairs softly, traversed the hallway, and, looking through the open door, beheld the professor at the piano.

The curtains of a window were drawn aside, and the moonlight swept grandly in. It passed over a part of the piano, bathed the professor's head

in soft radiance, fell upon the carpet, and touched the base of the opposite wall. Upon a sofa, half in light, half in shadow, reclined Schaaf, who had fallen asleep listening while the professor played.

The professor's face was uplifted and calm. Rapture and pain — so often mutual companions — were depicted upon it. I hesitated to break the spell which he had woven for himself. After watching for some seconds, however, I began quietly:

"Professor."

The tune broke off with a jangling discord, and the player turned to face me, smiling pleasantly.

"Pardon me," I went on, advancing into the room and standing in the moonshine that he might recognize me, "but I was attracted by the air you were playing. They tell me that it isn't Millocker's, but was composed by your new conductor at the ——— "

The professor answered with a laugh:

"Ja! He got de honour of it. Honour is sheap. He buy dat. It doesn't matter."

"Ah, then it isn't his own. And he bought the tune? From whom?"

"Me."

"You?"

"Ja. And I have many oder to gif sheap, too."

"THE MAN WAS ON HIS KNEES."

"But where did you get it?"

"I make it."

"When."

"Long 'go. I forget. I have make so many. Dey go away from my mindt an' come again back long time after."

"Professor, what would you give me to tell you where and when you composed that tune?"

He looked at me with a slightly bewildered expression. It was with an effort that I continued, as I looked straight into his eyes:

"I will hazard a guess. Could it have been in Paris — one day twelve years ago — "

"I neffer be in Paris," he interrupted, with a start which shocked and convinced me, slight evidence though it may seem. So I spoke on:

"What, never? Not even just that night — that 17th of February? Try to recall it, Heinrich Spellerberg. You remember she came in late, and — would think that those soft white fingers had been strong enough?"

"Hush, my friendt! I not touch her! She kill herself — she try to hang and she shoke her neck. No, no, to you I vill not lie! You speak all true! Mein Gott! Vat vill you do?"

The man was on his knees. I thought of the circumstances, the persons concerned, the high-

strung, sensitive lover of music, the coarse, derisive, perhaps faithless woman, and I replied quickly:

"What will I do? Nothing to-night. It's none of my business, anyhow. I'll sleep over it and tell you in the morning."

I left him alone.

In the morning the professor's door stood ajar. I looked in. Man, clothes, violin case, and valise had gone. Whither I have not tried to ascertain.

When the new opera was produced that evening the ——— Theatre orchestra was unexpectedly minus two of its second violins, for Schaaf, half-distracted, was wandering the cold streets in search of his friend.

ON THE BRIDGE

III

ON THE BRIDGE

WHEN I tell you, my only friend, to whom I so rarely write and whom I more rarely see, that my lonely life has not been without love for woman, you will perhaps laugh or doubt.

"What," you will say, "that gaunt old spectre in his attic with his books, his tobacco, and his three flower-pots! He would not know that there is such a word as love, did he not encounter it now and then in his reading."

True, I have divided my days between the books in a rich man's counting-room and those in my attic. True, again, I have never been more than merely passable to look at, even in my best days.

Yet I have loved a woman.

During the five years when my elder brother lay in a hospital across the river, where he died, it was my custom to visit him every Sunday. I enjoyed the afternoon walk to the suburbs, when the air has more of nature in it, especially

that portion of the walk which lay upon the bridge. More life than was usual upon the bridge moved there on Sunday. Then the cars were crowded with people seeking the parks. Many crossed on foot, stopping to look idly down at the dark and sluggish water.

One afternoon, as I stood thus leaning over the parapet, the sound of woman's gentle laugh caused me to turn and ocularly inquire its source. The woman and a man were approaching. At the side of the woman walked soberly a handsome dog, a collie. There was that in their appearance and manner which plainly told me that here were husband and wife, of the middle class, intelligent but poor, out for a stroll. That they were quite devoted to each other was easily discoverable.

The man looked about thirty years of age, was tall, slender, and was neither strong nor handsome, but had an amiable face. He was doubtless a clerk fit to be something better. The woman was perhaps twenty-four. She was not quite beautiful, yet she was more than pretty. She was of good size and figure, and the short plush coat that she wore, and the manner in which she kept her hands thrust in the pockets thereof, gave to her a dauntless air which the

quiet and affectionate expression of her face softened.

She was a brunette, her eyes being large and distinctly dark brown, her face having a peculiar complexion which is most quickly affected by any change in health.

The colour of her cheek, the dark rim under her eyes, and the other indefinable signs, indicated some radical ailment. In the quick glance that I had of that pair, while the woman was smiling, a feeling of pity came over me. I have never detected the exact cause of that emotion. Perhaps in the woman's face I read the trace of past bodily and mental suffering; perhaps a subtle mark that death had already set there.

Neither the woman nor her husband noticed me as they passed. The dog regarded me cautiously with the corner of his eye. I probably would never have thought of the three again had I not seen them upon the bridge, under exactly the same circumstances, on the next Sunday.

So these young and then happy people walked here every Sunday, I thought. This, perhaps, was an event looked forward to throughout the week. The husband, doubtless, was kept a prisoner and slave at his desk from Monday morning until Saturday night, with respite

only for eating and sleeping. Such causes are common, even with people who can think and have some taste for luxury, and who are not devoid of love for the beautiful.

The sight of happiness which exists despite the cruelty of fate and man, and which is temporarily unconscious of its own liabilities to interruption and extinction, invariably fills me with sadness, and the sadness which arose at the contemplation of these two beings begat in me a strange sympathy for an interest in them.

On Sundays thereafter I would go early to the bridge and wait until they passed, for it proved that this was their habitual Sunday walk. Sometimes they would pause and join those who gazed down at the black river. I would, now and again, resume my journey toward the hospital while they thus stood, and I would look back from a distance. The bridge would then appear to me an abrupt ascent, rising to the dense city, and their figures would stand out clearly against the background.

It became a matter of care to me to observe each Sunday whether the health of either had varied during the previous week. The husband, always pale and slight, showed little change and that infrequently. But the fluctuations of the woman as indicated by complexion, gait, ex-

pression, and otherwise, were numerous and pronounced. Often she looked brighter and more robust than on the preceding Sunday. Her face would be then rounded out, and the dark crescents beneath her eyes would be less marked. Then I found myself elated.

But on the next Sunday the cheeks had receded slightly, the healthy lustre of the eyes had given way to an ominous glow, the warning of death had returned. Then my heart would sink, and, sighing, I would murmur inaudibly:

"This is one of the bad Sundays."

There came a time when every Sunday was a bad one.

What made me love this woman? Simply the unmistakable completeness and constancy of her devotion to her husband, — the absorption of the woman in the wife. Had the strange ways of chance ever made known to her my feelings, and had she swerved from that devotion even to render me back love for love, then my own adoration for her would surely have departed.

Yes, I loved her, — if to fill one's life with thoughts of a woman, if in fancy to see her face by day and night, if to have the will to die for her or to bear pain for her, if those and many more things mean love.

My richest joy was to see her content with her husband, and the darkest woe of my life was to anticipate the termination of their happiness.

So the Sundays passed. One afternoon I waited until almost dusk, yet the couple did not appear.

For seven Sundays in succession I did not meet them upon their wonted walk.

On the eighth Sunday I saw the dog first, then the man. The latter was looking over the railing. The woman was not with him. Apprehensively I sought with my eyes his face. Much grief and loneliness were depicted there.

Was he or I the greater mourner? I wondered.

I suppose two years passed after that day ere I again beheld the widower — whose name I did not and probably never shall know — upon the bridge. The dog was not with him this time. It was a fine, sunny afternoon in May. Grief was no longer in his face. By his side was a very pretty, animated, rosy little woman whom I had never seen before. They walked close to each other, and she looked with the utmost tenderness into his face. She evidently was not yet entirely accustomed to the wedding-ring which I observed on her finger.

I think that tears came to my eyes at this sight.

Those great brown eyes, the plush sack, the lovely face that had borne the impress of sorrow so speedily, had felt death — those might never have existed, so soon had they been forgotten by the one being in the world for whom that face had worn the aspect of a perfect love.

Yet one upon whom those eyes never rested has remembered. And surely the memory of her is mine to wed, since he, whose right was to cherish it, has allowed himself to be divorced from it in so brief a time.

The memory of her is with me always, fills my soul, beautifies my life, makes green and radiant this existence which all who know me think cold, bleak, empty, repellent.

You will not laugh, then, my friend, when I tell you that love is not to me a thing unknown.

So runs a part of the last letter to my father that the old bookkeeper ever wrote.

THE TRIUMPH OF MOGLEY

IV

THE TRIUMPH OF MOGLEY [1]

MR. MOGLEY was an actor of what he termed the "old school." He railed against the prevalence of travelling theatrical troupes, and when he attitudinized in the barroom, his left elbow upon the brass rail, his right hand encircling a glass of foaming beer, he often clamoured for a return of the system of permanently located dramatic companies, and sighed at the departure of the "palmy days."

A picturesque figure, typical of an almost bygone race of such figures, was Mogley at these moments, his form being long and attenuated, his visage smooth and of angular contour, his facial mildness really enhanced by the severity which he attempted to impart to his countenance when he conversed with such of his fellow men as were not of "the profession."

[1] Courtesy of *Lippincott's Magazine*. Copyright, 1892, by J. B. Lippincott Company.

Like Mogley's style of acting, his coat was old. But, although neither he nor any of his acquaintances suspected it, his heart was young. He still waited and hoped.

For Mogley's long professional career had not once been brightened by a distinct success. He had never made what the men and women of his occupation designate a hit, or even what the dramatic critics wearily describe as a "favourable impression." This he ascribed to lack of opportunity, as he was merely human. Mr. and Mrs Mogley eagerly sent for the newspapers on the morning after each opening night and sought the notices of the performance. These records never contained a word of either praise or censure for Mogley.

Mrs. Mogley had first met Mogley when she was a soubrette and he a "walking gentleman." It was his Guildenstern (or it may have been his Rosencrantz) that had won her. Shortly after their marriage there came to her that life-ailment which made it impossible for her to continue acting. She had swallowed her aspirations, shedding a few tears. She lived in the hope of his triumph, and, as she had more time to think than he had, she suffered more keenly the agony of yearning unsatisfied.

She was a little, fragile being, with large pale blue eyes, and a face from which the roses had fled when she was twenty. But she was very much to Mogley: she did his planning, his thinking, the greater part of his aspiring. She always accompanied him upon tours, undergoing cheerfully the hard life that a player at " one-night stands " must endure in the interest of art.

This continued through the years until last season. Then when Mogley was about to start " on the road " with the " Two Lives for One " Company, the doctor said that Mrs. Mogley would have to stay in New York or die, — perhaps die in any event. So Mogley went alone, playing the melodramatic father in the first act, and later the secondary villain, who in the end drowns the principal villain in the tank of real water, while his heart was with the pain-racked little woman pining away in the small room at the top of the dingy theatrical boarding-house on Eleventh Street.

The " Two Lives for One " Company " collapsed," as the newspapers say, in Ohio, three months after its departure from New York; this notwithstanding the tank of real water. Mogley and the leading actress overtook the manager at the railway station, as he was about to flee,

and extorted enough money from him to take them back to New York.

Mogley had not returned too soon to the small room at the top of the house on Eleventh Street. He turned paler than his wife when he saw her lying on the bed. She smiled through her tears, — a really heartrending smile.

" Yes, Tom, I've changed much since you left, and not for the better. I don't know whether I can live out the season."

" Don't say that, Alice, for God's sake! "

" I would be resigned, Tom, if only — if only you would make a success before I go."

" If only I could get the chance, Alice! "

As the days went by, Mrs. Mogley rapidly grew worse. She seemed to fail perceptibly. But Mogley had to seek an engagement. They could not live on nothing. Mrs. Jones would wait with the daily increasing board-bill, but medicine required cash. Each evening, when Mogley returned from his tour of the theatrical agencies of Fourteenth Street and of Broadway, the ill woman put the question, almost before he opened the door:

" Anything yet? "

" Not yet. You see this is the bad part of the season. Ah, the profession is overcrowded! "

But one Monday afternoon he rushed up the stairs, his face aglow. In the dark, narrow hallway on the top floor he met the doctor.

"Mrs. Mogley has had a sudden turn for the worse," said the physician, abruptly. "I'm afraid she won't live until midnight."

Doctors need not give themselves the trouble to "break news gently" in cases where they stand small chances of remuneration.

Mogley staggered. It was cruel that this should occur just when he had such good news. But an idea occurred to him. Perhaps the good news would reanimate her.

"Alice," he cried, as he threw open the door, "you must get well! My chance has come. The tide, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune, is here."

She sat up in bed, trembling. "What is it, Tom?"

"This. Young Hopkins asked me to have a drink at the Hoffman this afternoon, and, while I was in there, Hexter, who managed the 'Silver King' Company the season I played Coombe, came in all rattled. 'Why this extravagant wrath?' Hopkins asked, in his picturesque way. Then Hexter explained that his revival of Wilkins' old burlesque on 'Faust' couldn't be put on to-

night, because Renshaw, who was to be the Mephisto, was too sick to walk. 'No one else knows the part,' Hexter said. Then I told him I knew the part; how I'd played Valentine to Wilkins' Mephisto when the piece was first produced before these Gaiety people brought their 'Faust up-to-date' from London. You remember how, as Wilkins was given to late dinners and too much ale, he made me understudy his Mephisto, and if the piece had run more'n two weeks, I'd probably had a chance to play it. Well, Hexter said, as everything was ready to put on the piece, if I thought I was up in the part, he'd let me try it. So we went to Renshaw's room and got the part and here it is."

"But, Tom, burlesque isn't in your line."

"Isn't it? Anything's in my line. 'Versatility is the touchstone of power.' That's where we of the old stock days come in! Besides, burlesque is the thing now. Look at Leslie, and Wilson, and Hopper, and Powers. They're the men who draw the salaries nowadays. If I make a hit in this part, my fortune is sure."

"But Hexter's Theatre is on the Bowery."

"That doesn't matter. Hexter pays salaries."

Objections like this last one had often been made, and as often overcome in the same words.

"And then besides — why, Alice, what's the matter?"

She had fallen back on the bed with a feeble moan. He leaned over her. Slowly she opened her eyes.

"Tom, I'm afraid I'm dying."

Then Mogley remembered the doctor's words. Alice dying! Life was hard enough even when he had her to sustain his courage. What would it be without her?

The typewritten part had fallen on the bed. He pushed it aside.

"Hexter and his Mephisto be d—d!" said Mogley. "I shall stay at home with you to-night."

"No, no, Tom: your one chance, remember! If you should make a hit before I die, I could go easier. It would brighten the next world for me until you come to join me."

Mogley's weaker will succumbed to hers. So, with his right hand around Mrs. Mogley's wrist, turning his eyes now and then to the clock in the steeple which was visible through the narrow window, that he might know when to administer her medicine, he held his "part" in his left hand and refreshed his recollection of the lines.

At seven o'clock, with a last pressure of her thin fingers, a kiss upon her cheek where a tear lay,

he left her. He had thought she was asleep, but she murmured:

"May God help you to-night, Tom! My thoughts will be at the theatre with you. Good-bye."

Mrs. Jones's daughter had promised to look in at Mrs. Mogley now and then during the evening, and to give her the medicine at the proper intervals.

Mogley reported to the stage manager, who showed him Renshaw's dressing-room and gave him Renshaw's costume for the part. His mind ever turning back to the little room at the top of the house and then to the words and "business" of his part, he got into Renshaw's red tights and crimson cape. Then he donned the scarlet cap and plume and pasted the exaggerated eyebrows upon his forehead, while the stage manager stood by, giving him hints as to new "business" invented by Renshaw.

"You have the stage to yourself, you know, at that time, for a specialty."

"Yes, I'll sing the song Wilkins did there. I see it's marked in the part and the orchestra must be 'up' in it. In the second act I'll do some imitations of actors."

At eight he was ready to go on the stage.

" May God be with you! " reëchoed in his ear, — the echo of a weak voice put forth with an effort.

He heard the stage manager in front of the curtain announcing that, " owing to Mr. Renshaw's sudden illness, the talented comedian, Mr. Thomas Mogley, had kindly consented to play Mephisto, at short notice, without a rehearsal."

He had never heard himself called a talented comedian before, and he involuntarily held his head a trifle higher as the startling and delicious words reached his ears.

The opening chorus, the witless dialogue of secondary personages, then an almost empty stage, old Faust alone remaining, and the entrance of Mephisto.

Some applause that came from people that had not heard the preliminary announcement, and whose demonstration was intended for Renshaw, rather disconcerted Mogley. Then, ere he had spoken a word, or his eyes had ranged over the hazy lighted theatre on the other side of the footlights, there sounded in the depths of his brain:

" My thoughts will be at the theatre with you! "

There were many vacant seats in the house. He singled out one of them on the front row and

imagined she was in it. He would play to that vacant seat throughout the evening.

In all burlesques of "Faust" the rôle of Mephisto is the leading comic figure. The actor who assumes it undertakes to make people laugh.

Mogley made people laugh that night, but it was not his intentional humourous efforts that excited their hilarity. It was the man himself. They began by jeering him quietly. Then the gallery grew bold.

"Ah there, Edwin Booth!" sarcastically yelled an urchin aloft.

"Oh, what a funny little man he is!" ironically quoted another from a song in one of Mr. Hoyt's farces, alluding to Mogley's spare if elongated frame.

"He t'inks dis is a tragedy," suggested a Bowery youth.

But Mogley tried not to heed.

In the second act some one threw an apple at him. Mogley laboured zealously. The ribald gallery had often been his foe. Wait until such and such a scene! He would show them how a pupil of the old stock companies could play burlesque! Song and dance men from the varieties had too long enjoyed undisputed possession of that form of drama.

But, one by one, he passed his opportunities without capturing the house. Nearer came the end of the piece. Slimmer grew his chance of making the longed-for impression. The derision of the audience increased. Now the gallery made comments upon his personal appearance.

"He could get between raindrops," yelled one, applying a recent speech of Edwin Stevens, the comic opera comedian.

And at home Mogley's wife was dying — holding to life by sheer power of will, that she might rejoice with him over his triumph. Tears blinded his eyes. Even the other members of the company were laughing at his discomfiture.

Only a little brunette in pink tights who played Siebel, and whom he had never met before, had a look of sympathy for him.

"It's a tough audience. Don't mind them," she whispered.

Mogley has never seen or heard of the little brunette since. But he anticipates eventually to behold her ranking first after Alice among the angels of heaven.

The curtain fell and Mogley, somewhat dazed in mind, mechanically removed his apparel, washed off his "make-up," donned his worn

street attire and his haughty demeanour, and started for home.

Home! Behind him failure and derision. Before him, Alice, dying, waiting impatiently his return, the news of his triumph.

"We won't need you to-morrow night, Mr. Mogley," said the stage manager as he reached the stage door. "Mr. Hexter told me to pay you for to-night. Here's your money now."

Mogley took the envelope as in a dream, answered not a word, and hastened homeward. He thought only:

"To tell her the truth will kill her at once.'

Mrs. Mogley was awake and in a fever of anticipation when Mogley entered the little room. She was sitting up in bed, staring at him with shining eyes.

"Well, how was it?" she asked, quickly.

Mogley's face wore a look of jubilant joy.

"Success!" he cried. "Tremendous hit! The house roared! Called before the curtain four times and had to make a speech!"

Mogley's esctasy was admirably simulated. It was a fine bit of acting. Never before or since did Mogley rise to such a height of dramatic illusion.

"Ah, Tom, at last, at last! And, now, I must

"IT WAS A FINE BIT OF ACTING."

live till morning, to read about it in the papers!"

Mogley's heart fell. If the papers would mention the performance at all, they would dismiss it in three or four lines, bestowing perhaps a word of ridicule upon him. She was sure to see one paper, the one that the landlady's daughter lent her every day.

Mogley looked at the illuminated clock on the steeple across the way. A quarter to twelve.

"My love," he said, "I promised Hexter I would meet him to-night at the Five A's Club, to arrange about salary and so forth. I'll be gone only an hour. Can you do without me that long?"

"Yes, go; and don't let him have you for less than fifty dollars a week."

Shortly after midnight the dramatic editor of that newspaper Miss Jones daily lent to Mrs. Mogley, having sent up the last page of his notice of the new play at Palmer's, was confronted by the office-boy ushering to the side of his desk a tall, spare, smooth-faced man with a sober countenance, an ill-concealed manner of being somewhat overawed by his surroundings, and a coat frayed at the edges.

"I'm Mr. Thomas Mogley," said this apparition.

"Ah! Have a cigarette, Mr. Mogley?" replied

the dramatic editor, absently, lighting one himself.

"Thank you, sir. I was this evening, but am not now, the leading comedian of the company that played Wilkins's 'Faust' at the ——— Theatre. I played Mephisto." (He had begun his speech in a dignified manner, but now he spoke quickly and in a quivering voice.) "I was a failure — a very great failure. My wife is extremely ill. If she knew I was a failure, it would kill her, so I told her I made a success. I have really never made a success in my life. She is sure to read your paper to-morrow. Will you kindly not speak of my failure in your criticism of the performance? She cannot live later than to-morrow morning, and I should not like — you see — I have never deigned to solicit favours from the press before, sir, and — "

"I understand, Mr. Mogley. It's very late, but I'll see what I can do."

Mogley passed out, walking down the five flights of stairs to the street, forgetful of the elevator.

The dramatic editor looked at his watch. "Half-past twelve," he said; then, to a man at another desk:

"Jack, I can't come just yet. I'll meet you at

the club. Order devilled crabs and a bottle of Bass for me."

He ran up-stairs to the night editor. "Mr. Dorney, have you the theatre proofs? I'd like to make a change in one of the theatre notices."

"Too late for the first edition, my boy. Is it important?"

"Yes, an exceptional case. I'll deem it a personal favour."

"All right. I'll get it in the city edition. Here are the proofs."

"Let's see," mused the dramatic editor, looking over the wet proofs. "Who covered the ——— Theatre to-night? Some one in the city department. I suppose he 'roasted' Gugley, or whatever his name is. Ah, here it is."

And he read on the proof:

"The revival of an ancient burlesque on 'Faust' at the ——— Theatre last night was without any noteworthy feature save the pitiful performance of the part of Mephisto by a doleful gentleman named Thomas Mogley, who showed not the faintest of humour and who was tremendously guyed by a turbulent audience. Mr. Mogley was temporarily taking the place of William Renshaw, a funmaker of more advanced methods, who will

appear in the rôle to-night. There are some pretty girls and agile dancers in the company."

Which the dramatic editor changed to read as follows:

"The revival of a familiar burlesque on 'Faust' at the ——— Theatre last night was distinguished by a decidedly novel and original embodiment of Mephisto by Thomas Mogley, a trained and painstaking comedian. His performance created an abundance of merriment, and it was the manifest thought of the audience that a new type of burlesque comedian had been discovered."

All of which was literally true. And the dramatic editor laughed over it later over his bottle of white label at the club.

By what power Mrs. Mogley managed to keep alive until morning I do not know. The dull gray light was stealing into the little room through the window as Mogley, leaning over the bed, held a fresh newspaper close to her face. Her head was propped up by means of pillows. She laughed through her tears. Her face was all gladness.

"A new — comedian — discovered," she repeated. "Ah, Tom, at last! That is what I lived for! I can die happy now. We've made a — great — hit — Tom — "

The voice ceased. There was a convulsion at her

throat. Nothing stirred in the room. From the street below came the sound of a passing car and a boy's voice, "Morning papers." Mogley was weeping.

The dead woman's hand clutched the paper. Her face wore a smile.

OUT OF HIS PAST

V

OUT OF HIS PAST

THIS is no fable; it is the hardest kind of fact. I met Craddock not more than a week ago. His inebriety prevented his recognizing me.

What a joyous, hopeful man he was upon the day of his marriage! He looked toward the future as upon a cloudless spring dawn one looks forward to the day.

He had sown his wild oats and had already reaped a crop of knowledge. "I have put the past behind me," he said. And he thought it would stay there.

He married one of the sweetest and best of women. The match was an ideal one — exceptionally so. His wife's mother objected to it and moved away on account of it. "That's a detail," said Craddock.

There are details and details. The importance of any one of them depends on circumstances.

Craddock had all the qualities and attributes

requisite to make him a son-in-law to the liking of his mother-in-law — lack of money.

So she went to live in Boston, maintained a chilly correspondence with her daughter, and bided her time.

Craddock had had his old loves, a fact that he did not attempt to conceal from his wife. She insisted upon his telling her about them, although the narration put her into manifest vexation of mind. Such is the way of young wives.

There was one love about which Craddock said less than about any of the others, because it had encroached more upon his life than any of them. It had nearly approached being a serious affair. He had a delicacy concerning the mention of it, too, for he flattered himself that the flame, although entirely extinguished upon his own side, yet smouldered deep in the heart of the woman. Therefore, he spoke of that episode in vague and general terms.

Strange as it seemed to Craddock, clear as it is to any student of men and women, it was this amour that excited the most curiosity in the mind of his wife.

"What was her name?" asked the latter.

"Agnes Darrell."

"I don't think she has a pretty name, at all events."

"Oh, that was only her stage name. I really don't remember what her real name was."

This was a judicious falsehood.

"Well, I'm sorry that you ever made love to actresses. I'm afraid I can't think as much of you after knowing — "

"After knowing that the first sight of you drove the memory of all actresses and other women in the world out of my head," cried Craddock, with a merry fervour that made his speech irresistible.

So they persisted in being extremely happy together for three years, to the grinding chagrin of Craddock's mother-in-law in Boston.

One July Friday, Craddock's wife was at the seashore, while Craddock, who ran down each Saturday to remain with her until Monday, was battling with his work and the heat and the summer insects, in his office in the city. Mrs. Craddock received her mail, two letters addressed to her at the seaside, two forwarded from the city whither they had first come.

Of the latter one was a milliner's announcement of removal. The other was in a large envelope, and the address was in a chirography unknown

to her. The large envelope contained a smaller one.

This second envelope was addressed to Miss Agnes Darrell, ——— Hotel, Chicago, in the handwriting of Craddock.

The feelings of Craddock's wife are imaginable. She took from this already opened second envelope the letter that it contained. It also was in Craddock's penmanship. She succeeded in a semistupefied condition in reading it to the end.

"May 13.

"My Dearest Agnes: — I have just a moment in which to tell you the old story that one heart, thousands of miles east of you, beats for you alone. With what joy do I anticipate the early ending of the season, when, like young Lochinvar, you will come out of the West. I shall contrive to be with you as often as possible this summer. With renewed vows of my unalterable devotion, I must hastily say good night.

"Yours always,

"Jack."

Any who seek a new emotion would ask for nothing more than Craddock's wife then ex-

perienced. It was not until the first shock had given away to a calm, stupendous indignation that she began to comment upon the epistle in detail.

"May 13th — at that very time Jack was sighing at the thought of my being away from him during the hot weather and telling me how he would miss me. All deception! His heart at that very time was beating for her alone. And he would contrive to see her as often as possible this summer — during my absence!"

It was then that Craddock's wife learned the great value of pride and anger as a compound antidote to overwhelming grief in certain circumstances.

When Craddock, quite unarmed, rushed to meet her at the seashore upon the next evening, she was en route for Boston.

In several ensuing years, Craddock's wife's mother took care that every communication from him, every demand for an explanation, every piteous plea for enlightenment, for one interview, should be ignored. The mother sent the girl to relatives in Europe; and after Craddock had spent three years and all the money that he had saved toward the buying of a house for his wife and himself, in trying to cross her path that he might have

a moment's hearing, he came back home and went to the dogs.

He would have killed himself had not hope remained — the hope that some chance turn of events would bring him face to face with her, that he might know wherefore his punishment. He would have proudly resolved to forget her, and he would have striven day and night to make a name that some day would reach her ears wherever she might go, had he not felt that some terrible mstake had taken her from him; time would eventually rectify matters. As hope bade him live and as his inability to forget her made it impossible for him to put his thoughts upon work, he became a drunkard.

He might not have done so had he been you or I; but he was only Craddock, and whether or not you find his offence beyond the extent of palliation, the fact is that he drank himself penniless and entirely beyond the power of his own will to resume respectability.

Naturally his friends abandoned him.

"Craddock is making a beast of himself," said one who had formerly sat at his table. "To give him money merely accelerates the process."

"When a man loses all self-respect, how can he

expect to retain the sympathy of other people?" queried a second.

"I never thought much of a man who would go to the gutter on account of a woman. It shows a lack of stamina," observed a third.

All of which was true. But particular cases have exceptionally aggravating circumstances. Special combinations may produce results which, although seemingly under human control, are almost, if not quite, inevitable.

One day Craddock's wife came back to him. In Paris she had made a discovery. She had kept the letter from Jack to the actress in a box that always accompanied her. Opening this box suddenly, her eye fell upon the postmark, stamped upon the envelope. She had never noticed this before. She knew that the date written above the letter itself was incomplete, the year not being indicated. According to the postmark, the year was 1875.

That was four years before Jack married her; two years before he first saw her.

She had always supposed the sending of the letter to her to be the act of some jealous rival of Jack's for the actress's affection. Now she knew not to what it might have been attributable.

When she arrived at the hospital where Crad-

dock was recovering from the effects of an unconscious attempt at suicide, she was ten years older, in fact, than when she had left him; twenty years older in appearance. She took him home and has been trying to make a man of him. She manifests toward him limitless patience and tenderness, and she tolerates uncomplainingly his bi-weekly carousals. But she can afford to, having come into possession of a small fortune at her mother's recent death.

Craddock is amiably content with her. He cannot bring himself to regard her as the beautiful young bride of his youth. So little remains of her former charm, her former vivacity and girlishness, that it seems as if Craddock's wife of other times had died.

A few days ago, I met at the Sheepshead Races a *passée* actress who was telling about the conquests of her early career.

"There was one young fellow awfully infatuated with me," she said, "who used to write me the sweetest letters. I kept them long after he stopped caring for me, until he was married; then I destroyed them. I found one short one, though, in an old handbag some years after, and, just for a joke I mailed it to his wife at his old address. I don't suppose it ever reached her,

though, or he would have acknowledged it, for the sake of old times. I wonder whatever became of Jack Craddock. People used to say he had a bright future — I say, tell that messenger-boy to come here! I m going to put five on Tenny for this next race. And you'll lend me the five, won't you?"

THE NEW SIDE PARTNER

VI

THE NEW SIDE PARTNER

A CHANCE in life is like worldly greatness — to which, indeed, it is commonly a requisite preliminary. Some are born with it, some achieve it, and some have it thrust upon them.

There is a youth who has had it thrust upon him. What he will do with it remains to be seen. Know the story, which is true in every detail save in two proper names:

The midnight train from New York, which crawls out of the Jersey City ferry station at 12.25, is usually doleful, especially in the ordinary cars. One who cannot sleep easily therein has a weary two or three hours' time to Philadelphia. Almost any equally wakeful companion is then a source of joy.

A girl of medium size, wearing a veil, and being rather carelessly attired in dark clothes which fitted a charming figure, walked jauntily up the aisle, saw that no seat was entirely vacant, and

therefore, after a hasty glance at me, sat down beside me.

Had not the two very young men in the seat behind us drunk too much wine that night in New York, the girl and I might never have exchanged a word. But the conversation of the youths was such as to cause between us the intercommunication of smiles, and eventually of speeches.

Then casual observations about the fulness of the car, the time of the train, and our respective destinations, — mine being Philadelphia, hers being Baltimore, led to the revelation that she was a constant traveller, because she was an actress. She had been a soubrette in musical farce, but lately she had belonged to a variety and burlesque company. She had gone upon the stage when she was thirteen, and she was now twenty.

"What kind of an act do you do?" I asked, in the language of the variety "profession."

"Oh, I can do almost anything," she said, in a tone of a self-possessed, careless, and vivacious woman. "I sing well enough, and I can dance anything, a skirt dance, a clog, a Mexican fandango, a Carmencita kind of step, anything at all. I don't know when I ever learned to dance. I didn't learn, it just came to me; but the best thing I do is whistling. I'm not afraid of any man

in the business when it's a case of whistling. There's no fake about my whistle; it's the real thing. I can whistle any sort of music that goes."

"Your company appears in Baltimore this week?"

"Oh, no! I've left the company. You see, I've been off for six weeks on account of illness, and now I'm going over to Baltimore to my father's funeral. He is to be buried to-morrow. See, here's the telegram. I've been having hard lines lately. I've not had any sleep for three days, and I won't get to Baltimore till daylight. I want to start back to New York to-morrow night, if I can raise the stuff. I had just enough money to get a ticket to Baltimore, and now I'm dead broke."

Then she laughed and got me to untie her veil. When it was removed, I saw a frank young face with an abundance of soft brown hair. About the light blue eyes were the marks of fatigue, and the colour of the cheeks further confirmed her account of loss of sleep.

Her feet pattered softly upon the floor of the car.

"I'm doing a single shuffle," she said, in explanation of the movement of her feet. "If you could do one too, we might do a double."

"Do you do your act alone on the stage?" I asked, "or are you one of a team?"

"We're a team. My side partner's a man. It pays better that way. We get $40 a week and transportation. I used to get only $12 except when I stood around and posed, then I got $35 and had to pay my own railroad fare. You can bet I have a good figure, when I get $35 for that alone! I handle the money of the team and I divide it even between us. I don't believe in the man getting nine-tenths of the stuff, do you? Besides, I'm older than my partner is. I put him in the business."

"How was that?"

"Oh, I picked him up on the street in New York. I saw that he had a good voice and was a bright kid, so I took him for my partner."

"But tell me how it came about."

She was quite willing to do so. And the rumbling of the wheels, the rush of the train over the night-swathed plains of New Jersey, accompanied her voice. All the other passengers were sleeping. To the following effect was her narrative:

At evening a crowd of boys had gathered at the corner of Broadway and a down-town street. One of them — ragged, unkempt, but handsome

"SHE PUSHED THROUGH THE CROWD TO HIM."

— was singing and dancing for the diversion of the others. That way came the variety actress, then out of an engagement. She stopped, heard the boy sing, and saw him dance. She pushed through the crowd to him.

"How did you learn to dance?" she asked.

"Didn't ever learn," he said, with impudent sullenness.

"Who taught you to sing?"

"None o' yer business."

"But who did teach you?"

"Nobody."

"What's your name?"

"None of your business."

"Will you come along with me into the restaurant over there?"

"No."

But presently he was induced to go, although he continued to answer her questions in the savage, distrustful manner of his class. They went into a cheap eating-house and saloon, through the "Ladies' Entrance," and while they sat at a table there, she learned by means of resolute and patient questions that the boy earned his living by blacking shoes now and then, and that he did not know who his parents were, as he had been "put" with a family whose ill-usage he had fled from

to live in the street. He began to melt under her manifestations of interest in him, and with pretended reluctance he gave his promise to wash his face and hands and to call upon her that evening at the theatrical boarding-house on Twenty-seventh Street where she was living. Then she left him.

When he called, she took him to her room and induced him to allow her to comb his hair. A deal of persuasion was necessary to this. Then she took him out and bought him a cheap suit of clothes on the Bowery. A half-hour later he was standing with her in the wings at Miner's Variety Theatre. A man and woman were doing a song and dance upon the stage.

"Watch that man," the actress said to the boy of the streets. "I want you to do that sort of an act with me one of these days."

When he had thus received his first lesson, she led him back to the theatrical boarding-house, and in her room he showed her what ability he had picked up as a singer and dancer. She secured a room for him in the house, and she had the precaution to lock him in lest he should take fright at his novel change of surroundings and flee in the night. When she released him on the next morning she found him docile and cheerful.

She escorted him into the big dining-room to breakfast.

"Who's your friend, Lil?" asked a certain actor whose name is known from Portland to Portland.

"He's my new side partner," she said, looking at the boy, who was not in the least abashed at the bold gaze of the negligently dressed soubrettes and the chaffing comedians who sat at the tables.

Everybody laughed. "What can he do?" was the general question.

"Get out there and show them, young one," she said, pointing to the centre of the dining-room.

The boy obeyed without timidity. When he had sung and danced, there was hilarious applause.

"Good for the kid," said the well-known actor. "What are you going to do with him, Lil?"

"I'm going to try to get an engagement for us together in Rose St. Clair's Burlesque Company."

"I'll help you," said the actor. "I know Rose. I'll go and see her right away, and you come there with the kid about 11 o'clock."

When the girl and her protégé arrived at the boarding-house of the fat manageress they found that the actor had so far kept his promise as to have inveigled her into a condition of alcoholic

amiability. She asked them what they could do. Each one sang and danced, and the girl, who also whistled, outlined to the manageress her idea of an "act" in which the two should appear. There was a hitch when the question of salary arose. The girl fixed upon $40. Rose thought that amount was too large. Lil adhered to her terms, and was about to leave without having made an agreement, when the manageress called her back, and a contract for a three weeks' engagement was signed at once.

The period between that day and the beginning of the engagement, which subsequently opened at Miner's Theatre, was spent by the girl in coaching her protégé. He was a year younger than she, a fact which tended to increase the influence that she promptly obtained over him. His sullenness having been overcome, he became a devoted and apt pupil. Having beheld himself in neat clothes and acquired habits of cleanliness, he speedily developed into a handsome youth of soft disposition and good behaviour.

The new song and dance "team" was successful. The boy quickly gained applause, and especially did he easily win the liking of such women as he met or appeared before. A new world was open to him. Naturally he enjoyed the easy

conquests that he made in the curious, careless circle into which he had been brought.

He is still having his " fling." But he has been from the first most obedient and unquestioning to his benefactress. He goes nowhere, does nothing, without previously obtaining permission from her.

She is proud of the advancement that he has accomplished already, and she is determined to make him a conspicuous figure upon the stage.

What is it that actuates this girl in her endeavour to elevate this boy in the world? What the mystery that brought to the gamin this guardian angel in the form of a variety actress who mingles bright sayings with lack of grammar, who tells Rabelaisian anecdotes in one minute and philosophizes in slang about the issues of life the next?

" You're in love with him, aren't you? " I said, as the train plunged on through the darkness.

" I don't know whether I am or not. He's just a kid, you know. I suppose the proper end of such a romance is that we should marry. But then I wouldn't be married to a man that I couldn't look up to."

"But women don't invariably love that way. I'm sure you're in love with the boy. Have you never thought as to whether you were or not?"

"Have I? I should smile! I thought of it even on the first night, after I picked him up, when I locked him in his room. But I have always regarded him in a sort of motherly way, although only a year older. It seems kind of unnatural for me to love him as a woman loves a man. If he was only older!"

"Ah, that wish is sure evidence that you love him!"

"One thing I do know is that, though he always obeys me, he doesn't care as much for me as I do for him."

"How do you know that?"

"He wouldn't think so much of other girls if he did. He doesn't look upon me as a woman for him to fall in love with. He regards me as an older sister. Why, he never even takes a girl to supper after the performance without asking my permission."

"And you give it?"

"Yes; but he never knows how I feel when I do."

"And how do you feel then?"

"The first time he asked me, it was like a

knife going through me. I haven't got used to it yet."

She paused for a time before adding:

"But, anyhow, he's going to make a name for himself some day. He has it in him. I'm not the only one that thinks so. I'm trying now to get him to go to a school of acting, but he thinks variety is good enough for him. He'll get over that, though."

She spoke so tenderly and yet so proudly of him, that I could not without a pang of pity meditate upon the probable outcome of this attachment, which, according to the logic of realists, will be the boy's eventual success in life, long after he will have forgotten the hand that lifted him out of the depth in which he first opened his eyes.

He knows nothing of his parentage. His benefactress once sought, by means of Inspector Byrnes's penetrating eye, to pierce the clouds surrounding his origin, but the inspector smiled at the hopelessness of the attempt.

"Where is he now?" I asked.

"I left him in New York," she said. "I suppose he'll blow in all his money as soon as he can possibly manage to do so."

And she laughed and did another "shuffle" with her feet upon the floor of the car.

THE NEEDY OUTSIDER

VII

THE NEEDY OUTSIDER

THERE was animation at the Nocturnal Club at three o'clock in the morning. The city reporters who had been dropping in since midnight were now reinforced by telegraph editors, for the country editions of the big dailies were already being rushed in light wagons over the sounding stones to the railroad stations.

The cheery and urbane African — naturally called Delmonico by the habitués of the Nocturnal Club — found his time crowded in serving bottled beer, sandwiches, or boiled eggs to the groups around the tables.

To a large group in the back room Fetterson related how he had once missed the last car at the distant extremity of West Philadelphia, and, failing to find a cab west of Broad Street, had walked fifty blocks after midnight and had still succeeded in getting his report in the second edition and thus making a "beat on the town."

Then spoke up a needy outsider whom Fetterson had brought in at one o'clock.

I neglected to mention Fetterson's penchant for queer company. It is quite right that reporters know policemen, are on chaffing terms with night cabmen, and have large acquaintance with pugilists and even with "crooks." But Fetterson picks up the most remarkable and out-of-the-way — not to speak of out-at-elbows — specimens of mankind, craft in distress on the sea of humanity. The needy outsider was his latest acquisition.

It is enough to say of this destitute acquaintance of Fetterson's that he was a ragged man needing a shave. In daylight, in the country, you would have termed him a tramp. Hitherto he had sat in our group in silence. When he opened his mouth to discourse, it was natural that he should have a prompt and somewhat curious hearing.

"Speaking of walking," he said, "I have walked a bit in my time. Mostly, though, I've rode — on freight-cars. The longest straight tramp I ever made was from Harrisburg to Philadelphia once when the trains weren't running. The cold weather made walking unpleasant. But what do you think of a woman — no tramp woman, either — starting from Pittsburg to walk to Philadelphia?"

"Oh, there is a so-called actress who recently walked from San Francisco to New York," put in some one.

"Yes, but she took her time, and had all the necessaries of life on the way. She walked for an advertisement. The woman I speak of walked in order to get there. She walked because she hadn't the money to pay her fare. Her husband was with her, to be sure. He was a pal o' mine. You see, it was a hard winter, years ago, and work was so scarce in Pittsburg that the husband had to remain idle until the two had begun to starve. He had some education, and had been an office clerk. At that time of his life he couldn't have stood manual labour. Still he tried to get it, for he was willing to do anything to keep a lining to his skin. If you've never been in his predicament, you can't realize how it is and you won't believe it possible. But I've known more than one man to starve because he couldn't get work and wouldn't take public charity. Starvation was the prospect of this young fellow and his wife. So they decided to leave Pittsburg and come to Philadelphia, where they thought it would be easier for the husband to get work.

"'But how can we get there?' the husband asked.

"She was a plucky girl and had known hardship, although she was frail to look at."

"'Walk,' she replied.

"And two days later they started."

The outsider paused and lighted a forbidding-looking pipe.

When he resumed his narrative he spoke in a lower tone. The recollections that he called up seemed to stir him within, although he was calm enough of exterior.

"I won't describe the experience of my pal on that trip. It was his first tramp. He knew nothing of the art of vagabondage. Of course they had to beg. That was tough, although he got used to it and to many tricks in the trade. They slept in barns and they ate when and where they could. It cut him to the heart to see his wife in such hunger and fatigue. But her spirits kept up better than his — or at least they seemed to. Often he repented of having started upon such a trip. But he kept that to himself.

"When the wife did at last give in to the cold, the hunger, and the weariness, it was to collapse all at once. It happened in the mountain country. In the evening of a cold, dull day they were trudging along on the railroad ties, keeping on the west-bound track so they could face approach-

ing trains and get off the track in time to avoid being run down.

" ' We'll stop in the town ahead,' the husband said. ' We can get warm in the station, and you shall have supper if we have to knock at every door in the town.'

" And the wife said:

" ' Yes, we'll stop, for I feel, Harry, as if — as if I couldn't — go any fur— Harry, where are you? '

" She fell forward on the track. When the man picked her up she was unconscious. Clasping her in his arms, he set his teeth and fixed his eyes on the lights of the town ahead and hurried forward.

" But before he reached the town, he found it was a dead body he was carrying.

" You see she had kept up until the very last moment, in the hope of reaching the town before dark.

" What the man did, how he felt when he discovered that her heart had ceased to beat, there in the solitude upon the mountains, with the town in sight at the foot of the slope in the gathering night, I can leave to the vivid imaginations of you newspaper men. For four hours he mourned over her body by the side of the track,

and those in the train that passed could not see him for the darkness.

" Then my pal took the body in his arms and started up the mountain, for the track at that point passed through what they call a cut, and the hills rise steep on each side of it. He had his prejudices against pauper burial, my pal had, and he shrunk from going to the town and begging a grave for her. He didn't need a doctor's certificate to tell him that life had gone for ever from her fragile body. He knew that she had died of cold and exhaustion.

" As he turned the base of the hill to begin to descend it, he saw in the clouded moonlight a deserted railroad tool-house by the track. In front of it lay a broken, rusty spade. He shouldered this and proceeded up the mountain. It was a long walk, and he had to stop more than once to rest, but he got to the top at last. There was a little clearing in the woods here, where some one had camped. The ruins of a shanty still remained.

" My pal laid down the body of her who had been his wife, with the dead face turned toward the sky, which was beginning to be cleared of its clouds. Then he started to dig.

" It was a longer job than he had expected it

to be, for my pal was tired and numb. But the grave was made at last, upon the very summit of the mountain.

" He lifted up the body of that brave girl, he kissed the cold lips, and he took off his coat and wrapped it carefully about the head, so that the face would be protected from the earth. He stooped and laid the body in the shallow grave, and he knelt down there and prayed.

" He filled the grave up with earth with the broken spade that he had used in digging it. All these things required a long time. He didn't observe how the night was passing, nor that the sky became clear and the stars shone and the moon crossed the zenith and began to descend in the west. He didn't notice that the stars began to pale. But he worked on until he had finished, and then he stopped and prayed again.

" When he arose, his face was toward the east, and over the distant hilltops he saw the purple of the dawn."

The outsider ceased to speak.

" What then? "

" That's all. My pal walked down the mountain, jumped upon the first freight-train that passed, and has been a wanderer on the face of the earth ever since."

There were various opinions expressed of this narrative. I quietly asked the needy outsider as we left the club at sunrise:

"Will you tell me who your pal was — the man who buried his wife on the mountain-top?"

There was contemptuous pity in the outsider's look as it dwelt a moment upon me before he replied: "The man was myself."

And then he condescended to borrow a quarter from me.

TIME AND THE TOMBSTONE

VIII

TIME AND THE TOMBSTONE

TOMMY MCGUFFY was growing old. The skin of his attenuated face was so shrunk and so stretched from wrinkle to wrinkle that it seemed narrowly to escape breaking. About the pointed chin and the cheekbones it had the colour of faded brick.

Old Tommy had become so thin that he dared not venture to the top of the hill above his native village of Rearward on a windy day.

His knees bent comically when he walked.

For some years the villagers had been counting the nephews and nieces to whom the savings of the old retired dealer in dry-goods would eventually descend.

Ten thousand dollars and a house and lot constituted a heritage worth anticipating in Rearward.

The innocent old man was not upon terms of intimacy with his prospective heirs. Having

remained unmarried, his only close associates were two who had been his companions in that remote period which had been his boyhood. One of these, Jerry Hurley, was a childless widower, a very estimable and highly respected man who owned two farms. The other, like himself a bachelor, was Billy Skidmore, the sexton of the church, and, therefore, the regulator of the town clock upon the steeple.

There came a great shock to Tommy one day. As old Mrs. Sparks said, Jerry Hurley, "all sudden-like, just took a notion and died."

The wealth and standing of Jerry Hurley insured him an imposing funeral. They laid his body beside that which had once been his wife in Rearward cemetery. His heirs possessed his farm, and time went on — slowly as it always does at Rearward. Tommy went frequently to Hurley's grave and wondered when his heirs would erect a monument to his memory. It is necessary that your grave be marked with a monument if you would stand high in that still society that holds eternal assembly beneath the pines and willows, where only the breezes speak, and they in subdued voices.

Years passed, and the grave of Tommy's old friend, Jerry, remained unmarked. Jerry's rela-

tives had postponed the duty so long that they had grown callous to public opinion. Besides, they had other purposes to which to apply Jerry's money. It was easy enough to avoid reproach; they had only to refrain from visiting the graveyard.

"Jerry never deserved such treatment," Tommy would say to Billy the sexton, as the two met to talk it over every sunny afternoon.

"It's an outrage, that's what it is!" Billy would reply, for the hundredth time.

It was, in their eyes, an omission almost equal to that of baptism or that of the funeral service.

One day, as Tommy was aiding himself along the main street of Rearward by means of a hickory stick, a frightful thought came to him. He turned cold.

What if his own heirs should neglect to mark his own grave?

"I'll hurry home at once, and put the money for it in a stocking foot," thought Tommy, and his knees bent more than usually as he accelerated his pace.

But as he tied a knot in the stocking, came the fear that even this money might be misapplied; even his will might be ignored, through repeated postponement and the law's indifference.

Who, save old Billy Skidmore, would care whether old Tommy McGuffy's last resting-place were designated or not? Once let the worms begin operations upon this antique morsel, what would it matter to Rearward folks where the banquet was taking place?

Tommy now underwent a second attack of horror, from which he came victorious, a gleeful smile momentarily lifting the dimness from his excessively lachrymal eyes.

"I'll fix 'em," he said to himself. "I'll go to-day to Ricketts, the marble-cutter, and order my own tombstone."

Three months thereafter, Ricketts, the marble-cutter, untied the knot in the stocking that had been Billy's and deposited the contents in the local savings-bank.

In the cemetery stood a monument very lofty and elaborate. Around it was an iron fence. Within the enclosure there was no grave as yet.

"Here," said the monument, in deep-cut letters, but bad English, "lies all that remains of Thomas McGuffy, born in Rearward, November 11, 1820; died —. Gone whither the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

This supplementary information was framed in the words of Tommy's favourite passage in his

favourite hymn. His liking for this was mainly on account of its tune.

He had left the date of his death to be inserted by the marble cutter after its occurrence.

Rearward folks were amused at sight of the monument, and they ascribed the placing of it there to the eccentricity of a taciturn old man.

Tommy seemed to derive much pleasure from visiting his tombstone on mild days. He spent many hours contemplating it. He would enter the iron enclosure, lock the gate after him, and sit upon the ground that was intended some day to cover his body.

He was a familiar sight to people riding or walking past the graveyard, — this thin old man leaning upon his cane, contentedly pondering over the inscription on his own tombstone.

He undoubtedly found much innocent pleasure in it.

One afternoon, as he was so engaged, he was assailed by a new apprehension.

Suppose that Ricketts, the marble-cutter, should fail to inscribe the date of his death in the space left vacant for it!

There was almost no likelihood of such an omission, but there was at least a possibility of it.

He glanced across the cemetery to Jerry Hurley's unmarked mound, and shuddered.

Then he thought laboriously.

When he left the cemetery in such time as to avoid a delay of his evening meal and a consequent outburst of anger on the part of his old housekeeper, he had taken a resolution.

"Threescore years and ten, says the Bible," he muttered to himself as he walked homeward. "The scriptural lifetime'll do for me."

A week thereafter old Tommy gazed proudly upon the finished inscription.

"Died November 11, 1890," was the newest bit of biography there engraved.

"But it's two years and more till November 11, 1890," said a voice at his side.

Tommy merely cast an indifferent look upon the speaker and walked off without a word.

The whole village now thought that Tommy had become a monomaniac upon the subject of his tombstone. Perhaps he had. No one has been able to learn from his friend, Billy Skidmore, what thoughts he may have communicated to the latter upon the matter.

Tommy now lived for no other apparent purpose than to visit his tombstone daily. He no longer confined his walks thither to the pleasant

days. He went in weather most perilous to so old and frail a man.

One of his prospective heirs took sufficient interest in him to advise more care of his health.

"I can easily keep alive till the time comes," returned the antique; "there's only a year left."

Rapidly his hold upon life relaxed. A week before November 11, 1890, he went to bed and stayed there. People began to speculate as to whether his unique prediction — or I should say, his decree — would be fulfilled to the very day.

Upon the fifth day of his illness Death threatened to come before the time that had been set for receiving him.

"Isn't this the tenth?" the old man mumbled.

"No," said his housekeeper, who with one of his nieces, the doctor, and Billy Skidmore, attended the ill man, "it's only the 9th."

"Then I must fight for two days more; the tombstone must not lie."

And he rallied so well that it seemed as if the tombstone would lie, nevertheless, for Tommy was still alive at eleven-thirty on the night of November 11. Moreover he had been in his senses when last awake, and there was every likelihood that he would look at the clock whenever his eyes should next open.

"He can't live till morning, that's sure," said the doctor.

"But, good Lord! you don't mean to say that he'll hold out till after twelve o'clock," said Billy Skidmore, whose anxiety only had sustained him in his grief at the approaching dissolution of his friend.

"Quite probably," replied the doctor.

"Good heavens! Tommy won't rest easy in his grave if he don't die on the 11th. The monument will be wrong."

"Oh, that won't matter," said the niece.

Billy looked at her in amazement. Was his old friend's sacred wish to miscarry thus?

"Yes, 'twill matter," he said, in a loud whisper. "And if time won't wait for Tommy of its own accord, we'll make it. When did he last see the clock?"

"Half-past nine," said the housekeeper.

"Then we'll turn it back to ten," said Skidmore, acting as he spoke.

"But he may hear the town clock strike."

Billy said never a word, but plunged into his overcoat, threw on his hat, and hurried on into the cold night.

"Ten minutes to midnight," he said, as he looked up at the town clock upon the church

steeple. "Can I skin up them ladders in time?"

Tommy awoke once before the last slumber. Billy was by his bedside, as were the doctor, the housekeeper, and the niece. The old man's eyes sought the clock.

"Eleven," he murmured. Then he was silent, for the town clock had begun to strike. He counted the strokes — eleven. Then he smiled and tried to speak again.

"Almost — live out — birthday — seventy — tombstone — all right."

He closed his eyes, and, inasmuch as the town clock furnishes the official time for Rearward, the published report of Tommy McGuffy's going records that he passed at twenty-five minutes after eleven P. M., November 11, 1890.

Very few people know that time turned back one hour and a half in order that the reputation of Tommy McGuffy's tombstone for veracity might be spotless in the eyes of future generations.

Billy Skidmore, the sexton, arranged to have Rearward time ready for the sun when it rose upon the following morning.

HE BELIEVED THEM

IX

HE BELIEVED THEM

He was a bachelor, and he owned a little tobacco store in the suburbs. All the labour, manual and mental, requisite to the continuance of the establishment, however, was done by the ex-newsboy, to whom the old soldier paid $4 per week and allowed free tobacco.

He had come into the neighbourhood from the interior of the state shortly after the war, and for a time there were not ten houses within a block of his shop. The shop is now the one architectural blemish in a long row of handsome stores. Miles of streets have been built up around it.

The old soldier used to sit in an antique armchair in the rear of his shop, smoking, from meal to meal.

"I l'arnt the habit in the army," he would say. "I never teched tobacker till I went to the war."

People would look inquiringly at his empty sleeve.

"I got that at Gettysburg in the second day's fight," he would explain, complacently.

He was often asked whether he was a member of the Grand Army of the Republic.

"No; 'tain't worth while. I done my fightin' in '63 and '64 — them times. I don't care about doin' it over again in talk. Talk's cheap."

This made folks smile, for he was continually fighting his battles over again in conversation. Every regular customer had been made acquainted with the part that he had taken in each contest, where he had stood when he received his wound, what regiment had the honour of possessing him, and how promptly he had enlisted against the wishes of parents and sweetheart.

"Of course you get a pension," many would observe.

He would shake his head and answer, in a mild tone of a man consciously repressing a pardonable pride.

"I never 'plied, and as long as the retail tobacker trade keeps up like this, I reckon I won't make no pull on the gover'ment treash'ry."

And he would puff at his cigar vigorously, beam upon the group that surrounded his chair, and start on one of his long trains of reminiscences.

He was an amiable old fellow, with gray hair

carefully combed back from his curved forehead, a florid countenance, boyish blue eyes, puffed cheeks, a smooth chin, and very military-looking gray moustache. He was manifestly a man who ate ample dinners and amply digested them. He would glance contentedly downward at his broad, round body, and smilingly remark:

"I didn't have that girth in my fightin' days. I got it after the war was over."

All who knew him admired him. He would tell with simple frankness how, after distinguishing himself at Antietam, he chose to remain a private rather than take the lieutenancy that was placed within his reach. He would frequently say:

"I ain't none o' them that thinks the country belongs to the soldiers because they saved it. No, sir! If they want the country as a reward, where's the credit in savin' it?"

How could one help exclaiming: "What a really noble old man!"

Finally some of the young men who received daily inspiration from his autobiographical narratives arranged a surprise for the old soldier. They presented him with a finely framed picture of the battle of Gettysburg, under which was the inscription:

"To a True Patriot, Who Fought and Suffered

Not for Self-Interest or Glory, but for Love of His Country."

This hung in his shop until the day of his death. Then his brother came from his native village to attend to his burial. The brother stared at the picture, inquired as to the meaning of the inscription, and then laughed vociferously.

In the old soldier's trunk was found a faded newspaper that had been published in his village in 1865. It contained an account of an accident by which a grocer's clerk had lost his arm in a thrashing-machine. The grocer's clerk and the old soldier were one person.

He had never seen a battle, but so often had he told his war stories that in his last days he believed them.

A VAGRANT

X

A VAGRANT

On a July evening at dusk, two boys sat near the crest of a grass-grown embankment by the railroad at the western side of a Pennsylvania town. They talked in low tones of the sky's glow above where the sun had set beyond the low hills across the river, and also of the stars, and of the moon, which was over the housetop behind them. Then there was noise of insects chirping in the grass and of steam escaping from the locomotive boilers in the engine shed.

A rumble sounded as from the north, and in that direction a locomotive headlight came into view. It neared as the rumble grew louder, and soon a freight-train appeared. This rolled past at the foot of the embankment.

From between two grain cars leaped a man, and after him another. So rapidly was the train moving that they seemed to be hurled from it. Both alighted upon their feet. One tall and lithe,

led the way up the embankment, followed by the other, who was short and stocky.

"Bums," whispered one of the boys at the top of the embankment.

The tramps stood still when they reached the top. Even in the half-light it could be seen that their clothes were ill-fitting, frayed, and torn. They wore cast-off hats. The tall man, whose face was clean-cut and made a pretence of being smooth-shaven, had a pliable one; the other was capped by a dented derby.

"Here's yer town at last! And it looks like a very jay place at that," said the short tramp to the tall one, casting his eyes toward the house roofs eastward.

The boys sitting twenty feet away became silent and cautiously watched the newcomers.

"Yep," replied the tall tramp, in a deep but serious and quiet voice, "and right about here is the spot where I jumped on a freight-train fifteen years ago, the night I ran away from home. That seems like yesterday, though I've not been here since."

"Skipped a good home because the old lady brought you a new dad! You wouldn't catch me being run out by no stepfather. Billy, you was rash."

"Mebby I was. But, on the dead, Pete, it was mostly jealousy. I thought my mother couldn't care for me any more if she could take a second husband. My sister thought so too, but she wasn't able to get away like me. Of course I was strong. It was boyish pique that drove me away. I didn't fancy having another man in my dead father's place, either. And I wanted to get around and see the world a bit. After I'd gone I often wished I hadn't. I'd never imagined how much I loved mother and sis. But I was tougher and prouder in some ways than most kids. You can't understand that sort of thing, Pete. And you can't guess how I feel, bein' back here for the first time in fifteen years. Think of it, I was just fifteen when I came away. Why, I spent half my life here, Petie!"

"Oh, I've read somewhere about that, — the way great men feel when they visit their native town."

The short tramp took a clay pipe from his coat pocket and stuffed into it a cigar-end fished from another pocket. Then he inquired:

"And now you're here, Billy, what are you go'n to do?"

"Only ask around what's become o' my folks, then go away. It won't take me long."

"There'll be a through coal-train along in about an hour, 'cordin' to what the flagmen told us at that last town. Will you be back in time to bounce that?"

"Yes. We needn't stay here. There's little to be picked up in a place like this."

"Then skin along and make your investigations. I'll sit here and smoke till you come back. If you could pinch a bit of bread and meat, by the way, it wouldn't hurt."

"I'll try," answered the tall tramp. "I'm goin' to ask the kids yonder, first, if any o' my people still live here."

The tall tramp strode over to the two boys. His companion shambled down the embankment to obtain, at the turntable near the locomotive shed across the railroad, a red-hot cinder with which to light his pipe.

"Do you youngsters know people here by the name of Kershaw?" began the tall tramp, standing beside the two boys.

Both remained sitting on the grass. One shook his head. The other said, "No."

The tramp was silent for a moment. Then it occurred to him that his mother had taken his stepfather's name and his sister might be married. Therefore he asked:

"How about a family named Coates?"

"None here," replied one of the boys.

But the other said, "Coates? That's the name of Tommy Hackett's grandmother."

The tramp drew and expelled a quick, audible breath.

"Then," he said, "this Mrs. Coates must be the mother of Tommy's mother. Do you know what Tommy's mother's first name is?"

"I heard Tom call her Alice once."

The tramp's eyes glistened.

"And Mr. Coates?" he inquired.

"Oh, I never heard of him. I guess he died long ago."

"And Tommy Hackett's father, who's he?"

"He's the boss down at the freight station. Agent, I think they call him."

"Where does this Mrs. Coates live?"

"She lives with the Hacketts. Would you like to see the house? Me and Dick has to go past it on the way home. We'll show you."

"Yes, I would like to see the house."

The boys arose, one of them rather sleepily. They led the way across the railway company's lot, then along a sparsely built up street, and around the corner into a more populous but quiet highway. At the corner was a grocery and dry-

goods store; beyond that were neat and airy two-story houses, fronted by a yard closed in by iron fences. One of these houses had a little piazza, on which sat two children. From the open half-door and from two windows came light.

"That's Hackett's house," said one of the boys.

"Thanks, very much," replied the tramp, continuing to walk with them.

The boys looked surprised at his not stopping at the house, but they said nothing.

At the next corner the tramp spoke up:

"I think I'll go back now. Good night, youngsters."

The boys trudged on, and the tramp retraced his steps. When he reached the Hacketts' house, he paused at the gate. The children, a boy of eight and a girl of six, looked at him curiously from the piazza.

"Are you Mr. Hackett's little boy and girl?" he asked.

The girl stepped back to the hall door and stood there. The boy looked up at the tramp and answered, "Yes, sir."

"Is your mother in?"

"No, she's across the street at Mrs. Johnson's."

"Grandmother's in, though," continued the boy. "Would you like to see her?"

"No, no! Don't call her. I just wanted to see your mother."

"Do you know mamma?" inquired the girl.

"Well — no. I knew her brother, your uncle."

"We haven't any uncle — except Uncle George, and he's papa's brother," said the boy.

"What! Not an uncle Will — Uncle Will Kershaw?"

"O-h, yes," assented the boy. "Did you know him before he died? That was a long time ago."

The tramp made no other outward manifestation of his surprise than to be silent and motionless for a time. Presently he said, in a trembling voice:

"Yes, before he died. Do you remember when he died?"

"Oh, no. That was when mamma was a girl. She and grandmother often talk about it, though. Uncle Will started West, you know, when he was fifteen years old. He was standing on a bridge out near Pittsburg one day, and he saw a little girl fall into the river. He jumped in to save her, but he was drowned, 'cause his head hit a stone and that stunned him. They didn't know it was Uncle Will or who it was, at first, but mamma read about it in the papers and

Grandpa Coates went out to see if it wasn't Uncle Will. Grandpa 'dentified him and they brought him back here, but, what do you think, the doctor wouldn't allow them to open his coffin, and so grandma and mamma couldn't see him. He's buried up in the graveyard next Grandpa Kershaw, and there's a little monument there that tells all about how he died trying to save a little girl from drownin'. I can read it, but Mamie can't. She's my little sister there."

The tramp had seated himself on the piazza step. He was looking vacantly before him. He remained so until the boy, frightened at his silence, moved further from him, toward the door. Then the tramp arose suddenly.

"Well," he said, huskily, "I won't wait to see your mamma. You needn't tell her about me bein' here. But, say — could I just get a look at — at your grandma, without her knowing anything about it?"

The boy took his sister's hand and withdrew into the doorway. Then he said, "Why, of course. You can see her through the window."

The tramp stood against the edge of the piazza upon his toes, and craned his neck to see through one of the lighted windows. So he remained for several seconds. Once during that time he closed

his eyes, and the muscles of his face contracted. Then he opened his eyes again. They were moist.

He could see a gentle old lady, with smooth gray hair, and an expression of calm and not unhappy melancholy. She was sitting in a rocking-chair, her hands resting on the arms, her look fixed unconsciously on the paper on the wall. She was thinking, and evidently her thoughts, though sad, perhaps, were not keenly painful.

The tramp read that much upon her face. Presently, without a word, he turned quickly about and hurried away, closing the gate after him.

When the two children told about their visitor later, their mother said:

"You mustn't talk to strange men, Tommy. You and Mamie should have come right in to grandma."

Their father said: "He was probably looking for a chance to steal something. I'll let the dog out in the yard to-night."

And their grandmother: "I suppose he was only a man who likes to hear children talk, and perhaps, poor fellow, he has no little ones of his own."

The tramp knew the way to the cemetery. But first he found the house where he had lived as a boy. It looked painfully rickety and sur-

prisingly small. So he hastened from before it and went up by a back street across the town creek and up a hill, where at last he stood before the cemetery gate. It was locked; so he climbed over the wall. He went still further up the hill, past tombstones that looked very white, and trees that looked very green in the moonlight. At the top of the hill he found his father's grave. Beside it was another mound, and at the head of this, a plain little pillar. The moon was high now and the tramp was used to seeing in the night. Word by word he could slowly read upon the marble this inscription:

"William Albert, beloved son of the late Thomas Kershaw and his wife Rachel; born in Brickville, August 2, 1862; drowned in the Allegheny River near Pittsburg, July 27, 1877, while heroically endeavouring to save the life of a child."

The tramp laughed, and then uttered a sigh.

"I wonder," he said, aloud, "what poor bloke it is that's doin' duty for me under the ground here."

And at the thought that he owed an excellent posthumous reputation to the unknown who had happened to resemble him fifteen years before, he laughed louder. Having no one near

to share his mirth, he looked up at the amiable moon, and nodded knowingly thereat, as if to say:

"This is a fine joke we're enjoying between ourselves, isn't it?"

And by and by he remembered that he was being waited for, and he strode from the grave and from the cemetery.

By the railroad the short tramp, having smoked all the refuse tobacco in his possession, was growing impatient. Already the expected coal-train had heralded its advent by whistle and puff and roar when his associate had joined him.

"Found out all you wanted to know?" queried the stout little vagabond, starting down the embankment to mount the train.

"Yep," answered the tall vagrant, contentedly.

The small man grasped the iron rod attached to the side of one of the moving coal-cars and swung his foot into the iron stirrup beneath. His companion mounted the next car in the same way.

"Are you all right, Kersh?" shouted back the small tramp, standing safe above the "bumpers."

"All right," replied the tall tramp, climbing upon the end of a car. "But don't ever call me

Kersh any more. After this I'm always Bill the Bum. Bill Kershaw's dead — " and he added to himself, " and decently buried on the hill over there under the moon."

UNDER AN AWNING

XI

UNDER AN AWNING

FOR ten minutes we had been standing under the awning, driven there at two o'clock at night by a shower that had arisen suddenly.

"A pocket umbrella is one of the unsupplied necessities of the age," said my companion.

"Yes, and the peculiarity of the age is that while such luxuries as the phonograph and the kinetograph multiply day by day, important necessities remain unsupplied."

My friend mused for a time, while he watched the reflection of the electric light in the little street pools that were agitated by the falling fine drops of rain.

He looked from the reflection to the light itself, and thus his eyes turned upward.

An expression of surprise changed to mirth, and then dropping his glance until it met mine, he said:

"Have you noticed anything peculiar about this awning?"

" No, what is it? "

" Simply that there is no awning. Look up and see. Here are the posts and there is the framework, but only the sky is above, and we've been getting rained upon for the past ten minutes in blissful ignorance."

It was as he said, so we ran to the next awning, which was a fact, not a figment of fancy.

" That reminds me," resumed my friend, " of Simpkins. He was a young man who used to catch cold at the slightest dampness. His being out in the rain without an umbrella never failed to result in his remaining in the house for two or three subsequent days.

" One night, Simpkins, surprised by an unexpected shower, took refuge beneath the framework of an awning, which framework lacked the awning itself. He waited for an hour, until the shower had passed, and then joyously took up again his homeward way, without having observed his mistake. He told me on the next day of his narrow escape from the rain. I happened to know that the awning to which he alluded had been removed a few weeks before. But I did not tell him so until there no longer seemed to exist any likelihood of his catching cold from that wetting. You see, his imagination had saved him."

" That tale is singularly reminiscent of those dear old stories about the man who took cold through sitting at a window that was composed of one solid sheet of glass, so clean that he thought it was no glass at all; and the men who, awaking in the night, stifling for want of fresh air, broke open the door of a bookcase which they took to be a window, and immediately noticed a pleasant draught of pure outside air."

" There is a likeness, which simply goes toward proving the truth of all three accounts. But the remarkable thing about Simpkins' case is that when he once learned that there had been nothing over his head during that rain, he immediately caught cold, although two weeks had passed since the night of the shower. Wonderful, wasn't it? "

" Astonishing, indeed."

Silence ensued and we meditated for awhile. Evidently the same thought came simultaneously into the minds of both of us, for while I was mentally commenting upon the deserted and lonely condition of the city streets at two o'clock on a rainy night, my friend spoke:

" A man is alone with his conscience, the electric lights, the shadows of the houses, and the sound of the rain at a time and place like this, isn't he? Standing as we stand now, under an awning,

during a persistent rainfall, at this hour, with no other human being in sight, a man is for the time upon a desert island. Which reminds me:

" One night, at a later hour than this, when the rain was heavier than this, I was alone under an awning that was smaller than this. Being without umbrella and overcoat, I saw at least a quarter of an hour waiting for me. The thought was dismal.

" Happy idea! I would smoke. I had a cigar in my mouth in an instant.

" Horrors! I had no matches.

" The desire to smoke instantly increased tenfold. I puffed despairingly at my unlit cigar. No miracle occurred to ignite it. I looked longingly at the electric lights and the gas-lamps in the distance.

" Like a sailor cast upon an island and straining his eyes on the lookout for a ship, I stood there scanning the prospect in search of a man with a light. I was Enoch Arden; the awning was my palm-tree.

" Ten minutes passed. No craft hove in sight.

" Suddenly uncertain footsteps were heard. I looked. Some one came that way. It was a squalid-looking personage—a professional beggar,

half-drunk. He landed upon my island, beneath my awning.

" ' For charity's sake, give me a match!' I cried.

" He looked at me — ' sized me up,' in the technical terminology of his trade. Intelligence began to illumine his countenance. He saw that the opportunity of his life had come. He held out a match.

" ' I'll sell it to you for fifty cents,' he said, with a grin.

" I had erred in revealing the depth of my want, the extent of my distress.

" I compromised by promising to give him a half-dollar if I should succeed in lighting my cigar with his solitary match. We did succeed. He took the fifty and started back for the saloon from whence he had come.

" Oh, my boy, the irony of fate — that same old oft-quoted irony!

" I hadn't blown three mouthfuls of smoke from that cigar when a friend came along with a lighted cigar, an umbrella, and a box full of matches.

" The whole effect of this story lies in the value that fifty cents possessed for me at that time. It was my last fifty cents, and two days stood between that night and salary day.

" I had another experience — "

But a night car came in view from around a corner, my friend ran for it, and his third tale remains untold.

SHANDY'S REVENGE

XII

SHANDY'S REVENGE

He was old enough to know better, and a superficial observer might have thought that he did. But a severe and haughty manner in repose is not any indication of knowledge, nor is a well-kept beard, even when it is turning gray. Melrose Welty, the possessor of these and other ways and features symbolical of wisdom, had no higher occupation in life than to sit in club-houses and cafés, telling of conquests won by him over women, chiefly over soubrettes and chorus girls.

Of his means of livelihood, no one had certain knowledge. He always dressed well, but he abode in a lodging-house, to which he never invited any of his associates. He affected the society of newspaper men, some of whom pronounced him a good fellow until they discovered that he was an ass; and he never refused an invitation to have a drink.

When he had you at a table in a quiet corner of a café, or in front of a bar, or in the lobby of a

theatre between the acts, no matter how the conversation began, he would invariably turn it into that realm to which his thoughts were confined.

"I've got a supper on hand to-night after the performance," he would probably say, "with a blonde in the ——— Company. A lovely girl, too! It's curious, old man, how I happened to meet her. I've talked to her only twice, but I made a hit with her in the first five minutes. I'll tell you how it was — "

Whereupon, if you were polite, and did not know Welty sufficiently to flee on a pretext, he would tell you how it was, inflicting upon you the wearisome minute details of the most commonplace thing in the world, the birth and growth of an acquaintance between a man about town and a silly young woman, not fastidious as to who pays for her food and drink as long as the food and drink are adequate.

If you were a newspaper man, Welty was apt to supplement his story with something like this:

"By the way, old fellow, if you have any pull with your dramatic editor, can't you give her a line or two? She hasn't much to do in the piece, but she does it well, and she's clever. She may get a good part one of these days. Have something nice said about her, won't you? "

And if you ever gave another thought to this plea, you determined to use whatever influence you had with the dramatic editor to this effect, that the young woman would have to exhibit very decided cleverness indeed ere she should have " something nice " said about her in the paper.

Welty was not wont to retain one divinity on the altar of his conversation longer than a week. But he did so once. He talked about the same girl every day for a month. And thereby came his undoing.

She was a slender little girl who was singing badly a small rôle in a certain comic opera at the time of these occurrences. She had a babyish manner across the footlights, and she was thought to be a blonde, for she was wearing a yellow wig over her own short black hair that season. Her first name was Emily.

Welty managed to be introduced to her by thrusting himself upon a little party of which she was a member, and in which was one acquaintance of his, at a restaurant one night. He called upon her at her boarding house the next day, where she received him with some surprise, and left most of the conversation to him. When he visited there again, she caused him to be told that she was out, and this took place a half dozen times. Their real

acquaintance never went any further, but an imaginary acquaintance between them, growing from Welty's wish, made great progress in his fancy and in the stories told by him at his club to groups of men, some of whom doubted and looked bored, while others believed and grinned and envied.

It was at the point where Emily had quite forgotten Welty, and Welty's stories portrayed her as recklessly adoring him and seeking him in cabs at all hours, that Barry McGettigan, a despised young reporter, "doing police," heard one of Welty's accounts of an alleged interview with Emily; and Barry, who had a way of knowing human nature and observing people, suspected.

Now Barry cherished a deep-rooted grudge against Welty, all the more dangerous because Welty was unaware of it. Its exact cause has never been torn from Barry's breast. Some have ascribed it to Welty's having mimicked Barry's brogue before a crowd in a saloon one night. Others have laid it to the following passage of words, which is now a part of the ancient history of the Nocturnal Club.

"Spakin' of ancestors," Barry began, "I'd loike to bet —"

" I'd like to bet," broke in Welty, " that your own ancestry leads directly to the Shandy family."

There was a general laugh, which Barry, whose nose was as flat as any Shandy's could have been but who had never read Sterne, did not understand.

" What did he mane? " Barry asked a friend. The friend told him to read " Tristram Shandy." He spent two hours in a public library next day and learned how his facial peculiarity had been used by Welty to create a laugh and incidentally to insult him.

This he never forgave. And he bided his time.

Now, having heard Welty boast of being the object of this Emily's infatuation, Barry McGettigan deflected his mind from the contemplation of murders, infanticides, fires, and other matters of general interest, and gave his best thoughts and skill to investigating this talked-of love affair of Welty's.

He discovered the true situation within three days. He found that Emily was engaged to be married to a college football player who came to the city once a week to see her.

He borrowed money, made himself very agreeable to Welty, and also got himself introduced to

the football player. The latter was a tall, lithe, heavy-shouldered, brown-faced, thick-knuckled youth, who practised all kinds of athletic diversions.

Barry McGettigan sounded the football man in one brief interview one night, between the acts of the comic opera, at the saloon next door. He found a means of fastening himself upon the football player's esteem. The collegian expressed a mild desire to see something of police-station life. Barry invited him to spend an evening with him on duty at Central Station. The collegian accepted. Barry appointed a time and named a certain café as a meeting place.

Then Barry invited Welty to dine with him at the same café on the same evening at the same hour. By means of his borrowed money, he had lavished costly drinks upon Welty of late, and Welty had reason to anticipate a dinner worth the accepting. Barry told Welty nothing of the collegian and he told the collegian nothing more of Welty.

When the evening came, Barry found Welty awaiting him at the café. The two sat down at a table. The preliminary cocktail had only arrived when in walked the collegian. Barry saluted him as if the meeting had only occurred by chance.

He made the collegian and Welty known to each other by name only. And then he ordered dinner.

When a bottle had been drunk, Barry innocently turned the current of the conversation to women. He spoke modestly of a mythical conquest he had recently made. The football player listened without showing much interest. Presently Barry paused.

Welty took a drink and began:

"No, my boy," said he to Barry, "you're wrong there. It's like you youngsters to think you know all about the sex, but the older you grow the less you think you know about them, until you get to my age."

Barry made no answer, but looked at Welty with becoming deference.

The football man's eyes were wandering about the café, showing him to be indifferent to the theme of discussion.

"I know," continued Welty, "that many more or less writers have said, as you say, that women must be sought and pursued to be won. They deduce that theory from the habits of lower animals and of barbarous nations, in which the man obtains the woman by chase and force. But it's all a theory, and simply shows that the learned

writers study their books instead of their fellow men and women."

The collegian looked restless, as if the conversation had gotten beyond his depth.

Barry remained silent, and with a flattering aspect of great interest in Welty's observations.

"Now," went on Welty, striking the table with the bottom of his glass, "I've had a little experience of this sort of thing in my time, and I can say that in nine cases out of ten, once you've attracted the attention of your game, let it alone and it will chase you. That's how to win women."

The collegian looked bored.

"Just to illustrate," said Welty, "I'll tell of a little conquest of my own. I use it because it is the first that comes to my mind, not that I'm given to bragging about my success in these matters. I suppose you've seen the opera at the —— Theatre?"

The collegian ceased looking bored. Barry McGettigan sat perfectly, unnaturally still.

"And," pursued Welty, "you've doubtless noticed the three girls who appear as the queen's maids of honour?"

The collegian looked somewhat concerned. Barry stopped breathing.

"Well," continued Welty, "you mayn't be-

"THE PROSTRATE FORM OF AN ASTONISHED MAN."

lieve it, for we've kept it really quiet, one of them girls is really dead gone on me."

The collegian opened his mouth wide, and Barry began to nervously tap his hand upon the table.

" It's the one," said Welty, " who wears the big blond wig. Her name's Emi— "

There was the noise of upsetting plates, bottles, and glasses, of a man's feet rapping up against the bottom of a table and his head thumping down against the floor. There was the sight of an agile youth leaping across an overturned table and alighting with one foot at each side of the prostrate form of an astonished man, whose gray whiskers were spattered with blood. There was the quick gathering of a crowd, an excited explanation on the part of the collegian, a slow recovery on the part of the man on the floor, and Barry McGettigan's vengeance was complete.

For, by one of those incredible coincidences that have the semblance of fatality, the football player's fist had reduced Melrose Welty's nose to a flatness which the nose of no imaginable Shandy ever has surpassed.

THE WHISTLE

XIII

THE WHISTLE

SHE was the wife of a railway locomotive engineer, and the two lived in the newly built house to which he had taken her as a bride a year before.

Many other people in the country railroad town used to laugh at a thing which she had once said to a gossiping neighbour:

"I can tell the sound of the whistle on Tom's engine from all other whistles. Every afternoon when his train gets to the crossing at the planing-mill, I hear that whistle, and then I know it's time to get Tom's supper."

The gossips found something humourous in the fact that the engineer's wife recognized the whistle of her husband's engine and knew by it when to begin to prepare his supper. So are the small manifestations of love and devotion regarded by coarse minds. You frequently observe this in the conduct of certain people at the theatre when tender sentiments are uttered upon the stage.

Perhaps the men were envious of the engineer.

He had a prettier wife, they said, when he was not present, than was deserved by a mere freight engineer, very recently elevated from the post of fireman. Perhaps, also, the petty malevolence of the women was due to the wife's superior comeliness. Be that as it may, each afternoon at half-past four or thereabouts, when Tom's whistle was blown at the crossing by the planing-mill, loungers in the grocery store and wives in their kitchens smiled knowingly and said:

"Time to begin to get Tom's supper, now."

But the engineer was careless and his wife was disdainful of their neighbours. She loved the sound of that whistle. In the earliest days of their married life it even sent the crimson to her cheeks. The engineer could make it as expressive as music. It began like a sudden glad cry; it died away lingeringly, tenderly. Virtually it said to one pair of ears:

"My darling, I have come back to you."

Whenever the engineer pulled the rope for that particular signal, he pictured his wife arising from her work-basket in their little parlour with a thrill of pleasure and affection, and passing out to the kitchen.

She, likewise, at the signal, made a mental image of Tom, seated in the engine cab, his one

hand fixed upon the shining lever, his eyes fixed upon the glistening tracks ahead.

At six o'clock, usually, supper was hot, and Tom arrived through the front gateway, glancing at the flower-bed in the centre of the diminutive grass plot, carrying his dinner-pail, having divested himself of his grimy, greasy blouse and overalls at the great repair shops, where his engine had already begun, with much panting, to spend the night.

In a small railroad town on the main line, one is continually hearing locomotive whistles. All the inhabitants know that one long moan of the steam is the signal of the train's swift approach; that two short shrieks of the whistle direct the trainmen to tighten the brakes; that four, given when the train is still, are intended for the flagman, who has gone away to the rear to warn back the next train, and that they tell him to return to his own train as it is about to start; that five whistles in succession announce a wreck and command the immediate attendance of the wreck crew.

In the town many cheeks blanch when those five long, ominous wails of the escaping steam cleave the air. A husband, a son, a father who has gone forth blithely in the morning, with his dinner-pail full, may be brought out of the wreck, mangled

or dead. And until complete details are known there is a tremor in the whole community. Some hearts beat faster, others seem to stand still. People speak in hushed tones.

One afternoon, the engineer's wife, observing the altitude of the sun, looked at the clock and saw that the time was a few minutes before five.

Tom's whistle had not yet blown.

At five-fifteen came the sound of another whistle. It was prolonged and then repeated. The engineer's wife stood still and counted.

Five!

The most docile and apparently cheerful patient in the ——— Asylum for the Insane is a widow, still young, who spends the greater time of each day sewing and humming tunes softly to herself. Every afternoon at about half-past four she assumes a listening attitude, suddenly hears an inaudible whistle, smiles tenderly, starts up and places invisible dishes and impalpable viands upon an imaginary table, and then loses herself in a reverie which ends in slumber.

No striking clock is allowed within her hearing. It was long ago noticed that the stroke of five or any series of five similar sounds would cause her to moan piteously.

The people afar in the country town do not laugh now when they talk of Tom and the whistle which was shrieking madly as he and his engine plunged down the bank together on that day when the huge boulder rolled from the hillside stone quarry and lay upon the tracks, just on this side of the curve above the town.

WHISKERS

XIV

WHISKERS

THE facts about the man we called "Whiskers" linger in my mind, asking to be recorded, and though they do not make much of a story, I am tempted to unburden myself by putting them on paper. It was mentally noted as a sure thing by everybody who saw him go into the managing editor's room, to ask for a position on the staff of the paper, that if he should obtain a place and become a fixture in the office, he would be generally known as Whiskers within twenty-four hours after his instalment.

What tale he told the managing editor no one knew, but every one in the editorial rooms deduced later that it must have been something a trifle out of the common, for the managing editor, who had gone through the form of taking the names of three previous applicants that afternoon and telling them that he would let them know when a vacancy should occur on the staff, told the man

whom we eventually christened Whiskers that he might come around the next day and write whatever he might choose to in the way of Sunday "specials," comic verses, or editorial paragraphs, on the chance of their being accepted.

The next day the hairy-faced man took possession of a desk in the room occupied by the exchange editor and one of the editorial writers, and began to grind out "copy."

He was a slim figure, with what is commonly denominated a "slight stoop." His trousers were none too long for his thin legs, his tightly fitting frock coat, threadbare, shiny, and unduly creased, was hardly of a fit for his slender body and his long arms. It was his face, however, that mostly individualized his appearance.

The face was pale, the outlines symmetrical, but rather feeble, and the countenance would have seemed rather lamblike but for the fact that it was framed with thick, long hair and a luxuriant beard, which caressed his waistcoat.

These made him impressive at first sight.

On the first day of his presence, he said little to the men with whom he shared his room in the office. On the second day he grew communicative and talked rather pompously to the exchange editor. He prated of his past achievements as a

newspaper man in other cities. He had a cheerful way of talking in a voice that was high but not loud. His undaunted manner of uttering self-praise caused the exchange editor to wink at the editorial writer. It engendered, too, a small degree of dislike on the part of these worthies; and the exchange editor made it a point to watch for some of the new man's work in the paper, that he might be certain whether the new man's ability was equal to the new man's opinion of it.

The exchange editor found that it was not. The new man had been in the office four days before any of his contributions had gone through the process of creation, acceptance, and publication. Some verses and some alleged jokes were his first matter printed. They were below mediocrity. The exchange editor ceased to dislike the whiskered man and thereafter regarded him as quite harmless and mildly amusing.

This view of him was eventually accepted by every one who came to know him, and he was made the object of a good deal of gentle chaffing.

He earned probably $15 or $20 at space rates, a lamentably small amount for so intellectual looking a man, but a very large amount considering the quality of work turned out by him.

Doubtless he would not have made nearly so

much had not the managing editor whispered something in the ears of the assistant editor-in-chief, whose duty it was to judge of the acceptability of editorial matter offered, the editor of the Sunday's supplement, and other members of the staff who might have occasion to "turn down" the new man's contributions, or to wink at the deficiencies in his work.

One day Whiskers, with many apologies and much embarrassment, asked the exchange editor to lend him a quarter, which request having been complied with, he put on his much rubbed high hat and hurried from the room.

"It's funny the old man's hard up so soon," the exchange editor said to the editorial writer at the next desk. "It's only two days since pay-day."

"Where does he sink his money?" asked the editorial writer. "His sleeping-room costs him only $3 a week, and, eating the way he does, at the cheapest hash-houses, his whole expenses can't be more than $8. No one ever sees him spend a cent. He must sink it away in a bank."

"Hasn't he any relatives?"

"He never spoke of any, and he lives alone. Wotherspoon, who lodges where he does, says no one ever comes to see him."

" He certainly doesn't spend money on clothes."

" No; and he never drinks at his own expense."

" He's probably leading a double life," said the exchange editor, jestingly, as he plunged his scissors into a Western paper, to cut out a poem by James Whitcomb Riley.

Without making many acquaintances, Whiskers, by reason of his hirsute peculiarity, became known throughout the building, from the business office on the ground floor to the composing-room on the top. When he went into the latter one day and passed down the long aisle between the long row of cases and type-setting machines, with a corrected proof in his hand, a certain printer, who was " setting " up a clothing-house advertisement, could not resist the temptation to give labial imitation of the blowing of wind. The bygone joke concerning whiskers and the wind was then current, and a score of compositors took up the whistle, so that all varieties of breeze were soon being simulated simultaneously. Whiskers coloured sightly, but, save a dignified straightening of his shoulders, he showed no other sign that he was conscious of the rude allusion to his copious beard.

Whiskers chose Tuesday for his day off.

It was on a certain Tuesday evening that one of

the reporters came into the exchange editor's room and casually remarked:

"I saw your anti-shaving friend, who sits at that desk, riding out to the suburbs on a car to-day. He was all crushed up and carried a bouquet of roses."

"That settles it," cried the editorial writer to the exchange editor, with mock jubilation. "There can be no doubt the old man was leading a double life. The bouquet means a woman in the case."

"And his money goes for flowers and presents," added the exchange editor.

"Some of it, of course," went on the editorial writer, "and the rest he's saving to get married on. Who'd have thought it at his age?"

"Why, he's not over forty. It's only his whiskers that make him look old. One can easily detect a sentimental vein in his composition."

"That accounts for his fits of abstraction, too. So he's found favour in some fair one's eyes. I wonder what she's like."

"Young and pretty, I'll bet," said the exchange editor. "He's impressed her by his dignified aspect. No doubt she thinks he's nothing less than an editor-in-chief."

The next day Whiskers was taciturn, as his

office associates now recalled that he was wont to be after "his day off." Doubtless his thoughts dwelt upon his visits to his divinity. He did not respond to their efforts to involve him in conversation.

He was observed upon his next day off to take a car for the suburbs and to have a bouquet in his hand and a package under his arm. The theory originated by the editorial writer had general acceptance. It was passed from man to man in the office.

"Have you heard about the queer old duck with the whiskers, who writes in the exchange room? He's engaged to a young and pretty girl up-town, and eats at fifteen-cent soup-shops so that he can buy her flowers and wine and things."

"What! Old Whiskers in love! That's a good one!"

One day while Whiskers' pen was busily gliding across the paper, the exchange editor broke the silence by asking him, in a careless tone:

"How was she, yesterday, Mr. Croydon?"

Whiskers looked up almost quickly, an expression of almost pained surprise on his face.

"Who?" he inquired.

"Ah, you thought because you didn't tell us, it wouldn't out. But you've been caught. I mean

the lady to whom you take roses every week, of course."

Whiskers simply stared at the exchange editor, as if quite bewildered.

"Oh, pardon me," said the exchange editor, somewhat abashed. "I didn't mean to offend you. One's affairs of the heart are sacred, I know. But we all guy each other about each other's amours here. We're hardened to that sort of pleasantry."

A look of enlightenment, a blush, a deep sigh, and an "Oh, I'm not offended," were the only manifestations made by Whiskers after the exchange editor's apology.

It was inferred from his manner that he did not wish to make confidences or receive jests about his love-affairs.

A time came when Whiskers seemed to have something constantly on his mind. Not content with one day's vacation each week, he would go off for periods of three or four hours on other days.

"Do you notice how queerly the old man behaves?" said the editorial writer to the exchange editor thereupon. "Things are coming to a crisis."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, the wedding, of course."

This inference received a show of confirmation afterward when Whiskers had a private interview with the managing editor, received an order on the cashier for all the money due him, and for a part of the managing editor's salary as a loan, and quietly said to the exchange editor that he would be away for a week or so. The editorial writer happened to be at the cashier's window when Whiskers had his order cashed. So when the editorial writer and the exchange editor compared notes a few minutes later, the latter complimented the former upon the correctness of his prediction that Whiskers' marriage was imminent.

"He didn't invite us," said the exchange editor, "but then I suppose the affair is to be a very quiet one, and we can't take offence at that. The old man's not a bad lot, by any means. Let's do something to please him and to flatter his bride. What do you say to raising a fund to buy them a present, in the name of the staff?"

"I'm in for it," said the editorial writer, producing a half-dollar.

They canvassed the office and found everybody willing to contribute. The managing editor and the assistant editor-in-chief had gone home, but as they had shown kindness to Whiskers, and were, in fact, the only two men on the staff who

knew anything about his private affairs, the exchange editor took his chances and put in a dollar for each of them.

"And now, what shall we get — and where shall we send it?" said the exchange editor.

"Not to his lodging-house, certainly. He'll probably be married at the residence of his bride's parents, as the notices say. We'd better get it quick, and rush it up there — wherever that is — somewhere up-town."

"But say," interposed the city editor, who was present at this consultation, "maybe the ceremony has already come off. I saw the old man giving in a notice for advertisement across the counter at the business office an hour ago."

"Well, we may be able to learn from that where the bride lives, anyhow, and some one can go there and find out something definite about the happy pair's present and future whereabouts," suggested the editorial writer.

"That's so," said the city editor. "The notice is in the composing-room by this time. I'll run up and find it."

The city editor left the editorial writer and the exchange editor alone together in the room, each sitting at their own desk.

" What shall we get with this money? " queried the former, touching the bills and silver dumped upon his desk.

" Something to please the woman. That'll give Whiskers the most pleasure. He evidently loves her deeply. These constant visits and gifts speak the greatest devotion."

" Of course, but what shall it be? "

The two were battling with this question when the city editor returned. He came in and said quietly:

" I found the notice. At least, I suppose this is it. What is the old man's full name? "

" Horace W. Croydon."

" This is it, then," said the city editor, standing with his back to the door. " The notice reads: ' On March 3d, at the Arlington Hospital for Incurables, Rachel, widow of the late Horace W. Croydon, Sr., in her 59th year. Funeral services at the residence of Charles — ' "

" Why," interrupted the editorial writer, in a hushed voice, " that is a death notice."

" His mother," said the exchange editor. " The Hospital for Incurables — that is where the flowers went."

The editorial writer's glance dropped to the

desk, where the money lay for the intended gift. The exchange editor sat perfectly still, gazing straight in front of him. The city editor walked softly to the window and looked out.

THE BAD BREAK OF TOBIT McSTENGER

XV

THE BAD BREAK OF TOBIT McSTENGER

"I'M a bad man," said Tobit McStenger, after three glasses of whiskey. And he was. In making the declaration, he echoed the expression of the community.

He looked it. Not only in the sneering mouth above the half-formed chin, and in the lowering eyes of undecided colour beneath the receding brow, but also in every shiftless attitude and movement of his great gaunt body, and even in the torn coat and shapeless felt hat — both once black, but both now a dirty gray — his aspect proclaimed him the preëminent rowdy of his town.

When out of jail he was engaged in oyster opening at Couch's saloon, or selling fresh fish, caught in the river, or vagrancy in the streets of Brickville. He lived in a log house containing two rooms, by Muddy Creek, an intermittent stream that flowed — sometimes — through a corner of the town. He was a widower and had a son nine

years old, little Tobe, who went to school occasionally, but gave most of his day to carrying a paper flour-sack around the town and begging cold victuals, in obedience to paternal commands, and throwing stones at other boys, who called him " Patches," a nickname descended from his father.

Little Tobe's face was always black, from the dust of the bituminous coal that he was compelled to steal at night from the railroad companies' yard. His attire was in miniature what his father's was in the large, as his character was in embryo what the elder Tobit's was in complete development. With long, entangled hair, a thin, crafty face, and stealthy eyes, he was a true type of malevolent gamin, all the more uncanny for the crudity due to his semirustic environments.

Such were Tobit and little Tobe, the most conspicuous of the village " characters " of Brickville, a Pennsylvania town deriving sustenance from its brick-kiln, its railroads, and its contiguous farming interests.

It was town talk that Tobit McStenger was a hard father; drunk or sober, he chastised little Tobe upon the slightest occasion.

" But," said Tobit McStenger, after admitting his severity as a parent before the bar in Couch's saloon, " let any one else lay a finger on that kid!

Just let 'em! They'll find out, jail or no jail, I'm ugly!" And he went on to repeat for the thousandth time that when he was ugly he was a bad man.

Whereupon the other loungers in Couch's saloon, "Honesty Tom Yerkes," the hauler, Sam Hatch, the bill-poster, and the rest, agreed that a man's manner of governing his household was his own business.

Tobit McStenger had his word to say upon all village topics. When in Couch's saloon one night he learned that the school directors had decided to take the primary school from the tutorship of a woman and to put a man over it as teacher, Tobit pricked up his ears and had many words to say. He was working at the time, and he spoke in loud, coarse tones, as he wielded his oyster-knife, having for an audience the usual dozen barroom tarriers.

"I know what that means," cried Tobit McStenger. "It means they ain't satisfied with having our children ruled with kindness. It means Miss Wiggins, who's kep' a good school, which I know all about, fer my son's one of her scholars — it means she don't use the rod enough. They've made up their minds to control the kids by force, and they went and hired a man to lick book

learnin' into 'em. Who is the feller, anyway?"

"Pap" Buckwalder read the answer to Tobit's question from the current number of the Brickville *Weekly Gazette.*

"The new teacher is Aubrey Pilling, the adopted son of farmer Josiah Pilling, of Blair Township. He has taught the school of that township for three winters, and is a graduate of the Brickville Academy."

Sam Hatch, standing by the stove, remembered him.

"Why, that's the backward fellow," said he, "that the girls used to guy. His hair and eyebrows is as white as tow, and when he'd blush his face used to turn pink. He always walked in from the country, four miles, every morning to school and back again at night. There ain't much use getting him take a woman's place. He's about the same as a woman hisself. He hardly talks above a whisper, and he's afraid to look a girl in the face."

"Ain't he the boy Josiah Pilling took out o' the Orphans' Home, here about twenty years ago?" queried Pap Buckwalder.

"Yep," replied Hatch. "I heerd somethin' about that when he went to the 'cademy here.

He was took out of a home by a farmer, who gave him his name 'cause the boy didn't know his own, nor no one else did, and so he was brought up on the farm."

"So that's the sort o' people they've put the education of our children into the hands uv!" exclaimed Tobit McStenger. "Well, all I got to say is, let him keep his hands off my boy Tobe, or he'll find out the kind of a tough customer I am."

Tobit McStenger, in the few weeks immediately following this change in the primary school, remained continuously industrious, to the surprise of all who knew him. As Tobit was an expeditious oyster-opener, Tony Couch, the saloon-keeper who employed him, was much rejoiced. Tobit toiled at oyster-opening and little Tobe became regular in his attendance at school.

The new school-teacher, a broad, awkward, bashful youth, painfully blond, came to town and accomplished that for which he had been called. He brought discipline to the primary school, an achievement none easier for the fact that many of his pupils were in their teens, and incidentally he suspended Tobit McStenger the younger.

When little Tobe, glad of the enforced return to the liberties of his begging days, brought home his soiled first reader and told his father that the

teacher had sent him from school with orders not to return until he could learn to keep his face clean, the father became swollen with an overflowing wrath. He swore frightfully, and started off, vowing that he would "show the white-faced foundling how to treat decent people's children."

And he had two tall drinks of whiskey put on the slate against him at Couch's and proceeded to carry out his threat.

It was a cold day in December. Pilling, the teacher, sat near the stove in the little square school-room, listening to the irrepressible hum of his restless pupils and the predominating monotonous sound of a small girl's voice reciting multiplication tables.

"Three times three are nine," she whined, drawlingly; "three times four are twelve, three times — "

The little girl with the braided hair stopped short. A loud knock fell upon the door.

A boy looked through the window, evidently saw the one who had knocked, then cast a curious look at Pilling, the teacher. Pilling observed this, and asked the boy:

"Who is it?"

After a moment of hesitation, the boy replied:

" It's old Patchy — I mean, Tobe McStenger's father."

Pilling, whose bashfulness was manifest only in the presence of women, had the utmost calmness before his pupils. He walked quietly to the door and locked it.

McStenger, furious without, heard the sound of the bolt being thrust into place, whereupon he began to kick at the door. Pilling turned the chair facing his class and told the girl with the braided hair to continue.

" Three times five are fifteen, three times six —"

A crashing sound was heard. McStenger had broken a window. Pilling looked around, as if seeking some impromptu weapon. While he was doing so, McStenger broke another window-pane with a club. Then McStenger went away.

That evening, Pilling had Tobit McStenger arrested for malicious mischief. The oyster-opener was held pending trial until January court. He was then sentenced to thirty days more in the county jail. Meanwhile little Tobe mounted a freight-train one day to steal a ride, and Brickville has not seen or heard of him since. He enlisted in the great army of vagabonds, doubtless. Perhaps some city swallowed him.

Tobit McStenger felt at home in jail. It was not

a bad place of residence during the coldest months. But for one defect, jail life would have been quite enviable; it forced upon him abstinence from alcoholic liquor.

Every period of thirty days has its termination, and Tobit McStenger became a free man. He returned to his old life, opening oysters during part of the time, idling and drinking during the other part. He made no attempt to spoil the peace of Aubrey Pilling, and he only laughed when he heard of the disappearance of Little Tobe.

Pilling, by his success in conducting the primary school, had won the esteem of Brickville's citizens. His timidity had diminished, or, rather, it had been discovered to be merely quietness, self-communion, instead of timidity. He had shown himself less prudish than he had been thought. Occasionally he drank whiskey or beer, which was looked upon as a good sign in a man of his kind.

Tobit McStenger did not know this. He invariably evaded mention of Pilling. People wondered what would happen when the two should meet. For Tobit was known to be revengful, and he was now, more than ever, in speech and look, a bad man.

The expected and yet the unexpected happened one night in Couch's saloon, — the scene of most

of the eventful incidents in Tobit McStenger's life since he had dawned upon Brickville. Tobit and Honesty Yerkes, Pap Buckwalder, old Tony Couch himself, and half a score others were making a conversational hubbub before the bar.

In walked Aubrey Pilling. He came quietly to an unoccupied spot at the end of the bar and ordered a glass of beer, without looking at the other drinkers. Some one nudged Tobit McStenger and pointed toward the white-haired young pedagogue. The noise of talk broke off abruptly.

McStenger placed his back against the bar, resting his elbows upon it, and turned a scornful gaze toward Pilling, who had taken one draught from his glass of beer.

"Say, Tony," began McStenger, in his big, growling voice, "who's your ladylike customer? Oh, it's him, is it? Well, he needn't be skeered of me. I don't mix up with folks o' his sort. You see, people could only expect to be insulted through their children by fellows of his birth —"

"Hush, Mack!" whispered Tony Couch, whose sense of deportment advised him that McStenger was treading forbidden ground. Pilling had not looked up. He stood quietly at some distance from the others, intent upon his glass of beer on the bar before him, perfectly still.

But McStenger went on, more loudly than before:

" By fellows, as I said, who came from orphans' homes, and never knew who their parents was, and whose mothers may have been God knows what — "

Pilling, without turning, had lifted his glass. With an easy motion he had tossed its remaining contents of beer into the face of Tobit McStenger. The latter drew back from the splash of the liquid as if stung. Then, with a loud cry of rage, he leaped toward Pilling. The teacher turned and faced him.

McStenger clapped one huge hand against Pilling's neck, and in an instant thereafter his long, bony fingers were pressing upon the teacher's throat, in what had the looks of a fatal clutch. But Pilling, with both his arms, violently forced McStenger from him. The teacher took breath and McStenger reached for a whiskey decanter. The others in the saloon looked on with eager interest, fearing to come between such formidable combatants. Tony Couch ran out in search of the town's only policeman. McStenger advanced toward the teacher.

Pilling was farm bred. He had chopped down trees with his right arm alone in his time. Pilling

thrust forth his arm with unexpected suddenness. Upon the floor, six feet behind his antagonist, was a cuspidor with jagged edges.

And Tobit McStenger slept with his fathers.

The jury acquitted the teacher on the plea of self-defence. The loungers in Couch's saloon judiciously said that it was a very bad break for Tobit McStenger to have made.

THE SCARS

XVI

THE SCARS

My friend the tune-maker has often unintentionally amused his acquaintances by the gravity with which he attributes significance to the most trivial occurrences.

He turns the most thoughtless speeches, uttered in jest, into prophecies.

" Very well," he used to say to us at a café table, " you may laugh. But it's astonishing how things turn out sometimes."

" As for instance? " some one would inquire.

" Never mind. But I could give an instance if I wished to do so."

One evening, over a third bottle, he grew unusually communicative.

" Just to illustrate how things happen," he began, speaking so as to be audible above the din of the café to the rest of us around the table, " I'll tell you about a man I know. One February morning, about eight years ago, he was hurrying

to catch a train. There was ice on the sidewalks and people had to walk cautiously or ride. As he was turning a corner he saw by a clock that he had only five minutes in which to reach the station, three blocks away. An instant later he saw a shapely figure in soft furs suddenly describe a forward movement and drop in a heap to the sidewalk, ten feet in front of him. A melodious light soprano scream arose from the heap. A divinely turned ankle in a quite human black stocking was momentarily visible. He was by the side of the mass of furs and skirts in three steps.

" He caught the pretty girl under the arms and elevated her to a standing posture. She recovered her breath and her self-possession promptly and glowed upon him with the brightest of smiles. He had never before seen her.

" ' Oh, thank you,' she said; adding, with the unconscious exaggeration of a schoolgirl, ' You've saved my life.'

" Realizing the absurdity of this speech, she blushed. Whereupon her rescuer, feeling that the situation warranted him in turning the matter to jest, replied:

" ' That being the case, according to the rules of romance, I ought to marry you, like all the men who rescue the heroines in stories.'

"'Oh,' she answered, quickly, 'this isn't in a novel; it's real life.'

"'Yes; besides which, I see by the clock over there I have only four minutes in which to catch a train. Good morning.'

"And he ran off without taking a second glance at her. He arrived at the station in due time.

"Three years after that he married the most charming woman in the world, after an acquaintance of only six months.

"This woman is as beautiful as she is amiable. Nature has not been guilty of a single defect in her construction. A tiny scar upon her knee is all the more noticeable because of its solitude.

"It is a peculiarity of scars that each has a history. The history of this one has thus far, for no adequate reason, remained a family secret.

"Another noteworthy fact about scars is that they may be, and in many cases they are, useful for purposes of identification.

"Of course you anticipate the dramatic climax of my story, gentlemen. Nevertheless, let me give it, for the sake of completeness, in the form of a dialogue between the husband and the wife.

"'How came the wound there?'

"'Oh, I fell against the corner of a paving-stone one icy morning three years ago.'

" ' And to think that I was not there to help you up! '

" ' True; but another young man served the purpose, and I'm fraid he missed a train on my account.'

" ' What! It wasn't on the corner of ——— and ——— Streets? '

" ' It was just there. How did you know? '

" So you see, as they completely proved by comparing recollections, the little speech uttered in merriment had been prophetic, a fact that they probably would never have learned had it not been for the identifying service of the scar."

" But if this has been kept a family secret, how do you happen to know it, and by what right do you divulge it? " one of us asked.

The ballad composer blushed and clouded his face with tobacco smoke; and then it recurred to us all that " the most charming woman in the world " is his wife.

"LA GITANA"

XVII

"LA GITANA"

THIS is not an attempt to palliate the foolishness of Billy Folsom. It is not an essay in the emotional or the pathetic. You may pity him or reproach him, if you like, but my purpose is not to evoke any feeling toward or opinion of him. I do not seek to play upon your sympathies or to put you into a mood, or to delineate a character. I simply tell the story of how certain critical points in a man's life were accompanied by music; how a destiny was affected by a tune. Anything aside from mere narrative in this account will be incidental and accidental. The manifestations of love, of wounded vanity, of recklessness; of even the death itself, are here subsidiary in interest to the train of circumstance. He who underwent them is not the hero of the recital; she who caused them is not the heroine. The heroine is a melody, the waltz tune of "La Gitana."

Everybody remembers when the tune was regnant. Its notes leaped gaily from the strings of

every theatre orchestra; soubrettes in fluffy raiment and silk stockings yelled it singly and in chorus; hand-organs blared it forth; dancers kicked up their toes to it; it monopolized the atmosphere for its dwelling-place; it was everywhere.

Until one night, however, it did not touch the ear of Billy Folsom. He had stayed late in the country, under the delusion that he was hunting. It seems there are a few shootable things yet in certain parts of Pennsylvania, and Folsom had the time and money to linger in search of them. He came back to town in fine, exhilarating November weather, and on one of these evenings when the joy of living is keenest, he and I strolled with the crowd. Why I strolled with Folsom I do not know, for he was not a man of ideas. He was even so bad as to be vain of his personal appearance, especially upon having resumed the dress of the city after months of outing.

We passed one of these theatres whose stages are near the street. A musical farce was current there. From an open window came the tune, waylaying us as we walked. The orchestra was playing it fortissimo. You could hear it above the footfalls, the laughter, and the conversation of the promenaders.

Folsom stopped. "Listen to that."

"Yes, 'La Gitana.' It's all around. It's a catchy thing, and suits this intoxicating weather."

"It goes to the spot. Let's go inside. What's the play?"

He turned at once toward the main entrance of the theatre.

"A farce called 'Three Cheers and a Tiger,' — a Hoyt sort of a piece. The little Tyrrell is doing her tambourine dance to the music."

"Never heard of the lady," he said to me. And then to the youth on the other side of the box-office window, "Have you any seats left in the front row?"

Folsom always asked for seats in the front row. This time it was fatal. As we walked up the aisle, Folsom ahead, the little Tyrrell shot one casual glance of her gray eyes at him, as almost any dancer would have done at a front row newcomer entering while she was on the stage. In the next instant her eyes were following her toe in its swift flight upward to the centre of the tambourine that her hand brought downward to meet it. But the one glance across the footlights had been productive. Folsom sat staring over the heads of the musicians, his gaze fastened upon the little Tyrrell, who was leaping about on the stage to the tune of

"La Gitana." His lips opened slightly and remained so. His eyes feasted upon the flying dancer in the rippling blond wig, his ears drank in the buoyant notes.

It is well known that power lies in a saltatorial ensemble of white lace skirts, pale blue hose, lustrous naked arms, undulating bodice, magnetic eyes, flying hair, and an unchanging smile, to focus the perceptions of a man, to absorb his consciousness, aided by a tune which seems to close out from him all the rest of the world.

And there, while this plump little girl danced and the frivolous, stupid crowd looked eagerly on, from all parts of the overheated theatre, began the tragedy of Billy Folsom.

He gazed in rapture, and when she had finished and stood panting and kissing her hands in response to applause, he heaved an eloquent sigh.

"I'd like to meet that girl," he whispered to me, assuming a tone of carelessness.

Thereafter he kept his eye fixed upon the wings until she reappeared. And the rest of the performance interested him only when she was in view.

I knew the symptoms, but I did not think the malady would become chronic.

He managed to have himself introduced to her

a week later in New York by Ted Clarke, the artist, who made newspaper sketches of her in some of her dances. Folsom saw her going up the steps to an elevated railway station. He ran after her, in order to be near her. He followed her into a car, where Ted Clarke, recognizing her, rose to give her his seat. She rewarded the artist by opening a conversation with him, and Folsom availed himself of his acquaintance with Clarke to salute the latter with surprising cordiality. She looked a few years older and less girlish without her blond wig but she was still quite pretty in brown hair. She treated Folsom with her wonted offhand amiability. He left the train when she left it, and he walked a block with her. With pardonable shrewdness she inspected his visage, attire, and manner, for indications of his pecuniary and social standing, while he was indulging in silly commonplaces. When they parted at the quiet hotel where she lived she said lightly:

"Come and see me sometime."

To her surprise, perhaps, he came the next day, preceded by several dozen roses and a few pounds of bonbons.

Every night thereafter he was at the theatre where she was appearing, watching her dance from the front row or from the lobby, agitated

with mingled pleasure and jealousy when she received loud applause, angry at the audience when the plaudits were not enthusiastic. When their acquaintance was two weeks old, she allowed him to wait for her at the stage door, and at last he was permitted to take her to supper.

There was a second supper, at which four composed the party. We had a room to ourselves, with a piano in the corner. The event lasted long, and near the end, while the other soubrette played the tune on the piano, and Folsom kept time by clinking the champagne glass against the bottle, the little Tyrrell, continually laughing, did her skirt dance, "La Gitana."

Thus with that waltz tune ever sounding in his ears, he fell in love with her; strangely enough, really in love. She, having her own affairs to mind, gave him no thought when he was not with her, and when they were together she deemed him quite a good-natured, bearable fellow, as long as he did not bore her.

He made several declarations of love to her. She smiled at them, and said, "You're like the rest; you'll get over it. Meanwhile, don't look like that; be cheerful." At certain times, when circumstances were auspicious, when there was night and electric light and a starry sky with a moon in

it, she was half-sentimental, but such moods were only superficial and short-lived, and she invariably brought an end to them with flippant laughter or some matter-of-fact speech that came with a shock to Billy, although it did not cool his adoration.

Billy became quite gloomy. He was the veritable sighing lover. Although for a month he was admittedly the chief of her admirers and saw her every day, he seemed to make no progress toward securing a hospitable reception for and a response to his love.

One day, as they were walking together on Broadway, she said:

"You're always in the dumps nowadays. Really you must not be that way. Doleful people make me tired."

And thereafter Billy, possessed by a horrible fear that his mournful demeanour might cause his banishment from her, kept making desperate efforts to be lively, which were a dismal failure. It was ludicrous. The gayer he affected to be, the more emphatic was his manifest depression. So she wearied of his company. One day he called at her hotel, and, as was his custom, went immediately to her sitting-room without sending in his card. Before he knocked at the door, he heard

the notes of her piano; some one was playing the air of "La Gitana" with one finger. After two or three bars, the instrument was silent. Then a man's voice was heard. Billy knocked angrily. Miss Tyrrell opened the door, looked annoyed when she saw him, and introduced him to the tenor of a comic opera company of which she recently had been engaged as leading soubrette. Billy's call was a short one.

At eight o'clock that evening he sent this note to her from the café where he was dining:

"Will be at stage door with carriage at eleven, as before."

He was there at eleven. So was the tenor. The little Tyrrell came out and looked from one to the other. Billy pointed to his waiting carriage. The dancer took the tenor's arm and said:

"I'm sorry I can't accept your invitation, Mr. Folsom. Really I'm very much obliged to you, but I have an engagement."

She went off with the tenor, and Billy went off with the cab and made himself drunker than he had ever been in his life. At dawn his feet were seen protruding from the window of a coupé that was being driven up Broadway, and he was bawling forth, as best he could, the tune which had

served indirectly to bring the little Tyrrell into his life.

After that night, it was the old story, a woman ridding herself of a man for whom she had never cared, and who indeed was not worth caring for. But the operation was just as hard upon Folsom as if he had been. You know the stages of the process. She began by being not at home or just about to go out. He wrote pleading notes to her, in boyish phraseology, and she laughed over these with the tenor. He made the breaking off the more painful by going nightly to see her dance that fatal melody. He watched her from afar upon the street, and almost invariably saw the tenor by her side. He drank continually, and he begged Ted Clarke to tell her, in a casual way, that he was going to the dogs on account of her treatment of him. Whereupon she laughed and then looked scornful, saying: "If he's fool enough to drink himself to death because a woman didn't happen to fall in love with him, the sooner he finishes the work the better. I have no use for such a man."

No one has, and I told Billy so. But he kept up his pace toward the goal of confirmed drunkenness. He ceased his attendance at the theatre where she danced, only after he learned that the tenor had married her. But that dance of

hers had become a part of his life. Its accompanying tune was now as necessary to his aural sensibilities as food to his stomach. He therefore spent his evenings going to theatres and concert-halls where "La Gitana" was likely to be sung or played. He rarely sought in vain. The melody was to be found serving some purpose or other at almost every theatre that winter. It was the "Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay" of its time.

Some men who drink themselves to death require years and wit to complete the task. Others save time by catching pneumonia through exposure due to drink. Billy Folsom was one of the pneumonia class. He "slept off" the effects of a long lark in an area-way belonging to a total stranger. A policeman took him to his lodgings by way of the station house, and a day later his landlord sent for a doctor. Five days after that I went over to see him. He was in bed, and one of his friends, a man of his own kind, but of stronger fibre, was keeping him company. Billy told us how it had come about:

"I wouldn't have gone on that racket if it hadn't been for one thing. I'd made up my mind to turn over a new leaf, and I was walking along full of plans for reformation. Suddenly I heard the sound of a banjo, coming from an up-stairs

window, playing a certain tune I've got somewhat attached to. I saw the place was a kind of a dive and I went in. I got the banjo-player to strum the piece over again, and I bought drinks for the crowd. Then I made him play once more, and there were other rounds of drinks, and the last I remember is that I was waltzing around the place to that air. Two days after that the officer found me trespassing on some one's property by sleeping on it. I dropped my overcoat and hat somewhere, and it seemed there must have been a draft around, for I caught this cold."

I told Folsom to stop talking, as he was manifestly much weaker than he or his friend supposed him to be. There ensued a few seconds of silence. A loud noise broke upon the stillness with a shocking suddenness. It was the clamour of a band-piano in the street beneath Folsom's window, and of all the tunes in the world the tune that it shrieked out was "La Gitana." I looked at Folsom.

He rose in his bed and, clenching his teeth, he propelled through their interstices the word:

"Damn!"

He remained sitting for a time, his hair tumbled about, his eyes wide open but expressive of meditation as the notes continued to be thumped up-

ward by the turbulent instrument. Presently he said, in a husky voice:

" How that thing pursues me! It's like a fiend. It has no let-up. It follows me even into the next world."

He sat for a moment more, intently listening. Then, with a quick, peevish sigh, he fell back from weakness. We by his side did not know it at the instant, but we discovered in a short time what had taken place when his head had touched the pillow, for he remained so still.

And that was the last of Billy Folsom, and up from the murmuring street below came the notes of the band-piano playing " La Gitana."

TRANSITION

XVIII

TRANSITION

THREE of us sat upon an upper deck, sailing to an island. The day was sunlit, the wind was gentle, and the faintest ripple passed over the sea.

" Do you see the tremulous old man sitting over there by the pilot-house absorbing the sunshine? He reminds me of another old man, one whom I watched for six years, while he faded and died. He never knew me, but he walked by my house daily and I walked by his. It was an interesting study. The conclusion of the process was so inevitable. The time came when he did not pass my house. Then he took the sunlight in a bow-window on the second floor of his residence. So closely had I watched his decadence during the six years that I was able to say to myself one morning, ' There will be crape on his door before the day is out.' And so there was."

The bon-vivant laughed rather mechanically, but the other, he who makes verses so dainty that

the world does not heed them, smiled softly and sympathetically to me and said:

" You are right. Nothing is so fascinating as the study of a progress — a development or a decline. The inevitability of the end makes it more engrossing, for it relieves it of the undue eagerness of curiosity, the feverishness of uncertainty."

" Well, I am content rather to live than to contemplate life," said the bon-vivant. " It's true I have given myself up to observing anxiously such an advancement as you describe — a vulgar one you will say. When I was a very young man I was a very thin man. I determined to amplify my dimensions. I followed with careful interest my daily increase toward my present — let us not say obesity, but call it portliness."

" You are inclined to be easy upon yourself," I commented.

" Indeed I am — in all matters."

After a pause the verse-maker, throwing away his cigarette, took up again the theme that I had introduced.

" Yes, it is an engaging occupation to note any progression, even when it is toward a fatal or a horrible culmination. But when it is to some beautiful and happy outcome, this advancement is an ineffably charming spectacle. Such it is

when it is the unfolding of a flower or the filling out of a poetic thought.

"But no growth nor transformation in the material world is more entrancing to observe than that by which a young girl becomes a lovely woman.

"This transition seems to be sudden. It is not so. It is rapid, perhaps, as life goes, but each stage is distinctly marked. All men have not time to watch the change, however, and so most men awaken to its occurrence only when it is completed. Such was the case of the young and low-born lover of Consuelo in George Sand's romance. Do you remember that incomparable scene in which he suddenly begins to notice that some feature of Consuelo is handsome, and, with surprise, calls her attention to its comeliness? She, equally astonished and delighted, joins him in the visual examination of her charms, and the two pass from one attraction to the other, finally completing the discovery that she is a beautiful woman.

"The Italian gamin was not the sort of man to have anticipated this transfiguration and to have watched its stages.

"You may argue that his delight at suddenly opening his eyes to the finished work was greater

than would have been his pleasure at contemplating the alteration in process. Doubtless his was. As to whether yours would be in such a case, depends upon your temperament.

"I have experienced both of these pleasures. Perhaps it may be due to certain special circumstances that I cherish the memory of the more lasting delight, even though it was tempered by occasional doubts as to the end, more tenderly than I do the more sudden and keen awakening.

"There is a woman who first came under my observations when she was thirteen years old. She was then agreeable enough to the eye, more by reason of the gentleness of her expression than for any noteworthy attractions of face and figure. Her face, indeed, was plain and uninteresting; her figure unformed and too slim. Her hair, however, was charming, being soft and extremely light in colour. She seemed awkward, too, and timid, through fear of offending or making a bad impression.

"For a reason I was particularly interested in her. I knew, young as I then was, that plain girls, in many cases, develop into handsome women.

"At fourteen her hair showed indications of changing its tint. Its tendency was unmistakably toward brown. This was temporarily unfavour-

able, but a brightening of the blue eyes and a newly acquired poise of the head, with a step toward self-confidence in manner, were compensating alterations.

" At fifteen there came an emancipation of mind and speech from schoolgirl habits. A defensive assumption of impertinent reserve, varied by fits of superficial garrulity, gave way to real thoughtfulness, to natural amiability. Then came, too, an emboldenment of the facial outline, a constancy to the colour of the cheeks, a certainty of gait, and the first perceptible roundness of contour beneath the neck.

" At sixteen she had adorable hands, and she could wear short sleeves with impunity. A rational, unforced, and coherent vivacity had now revealed itself as a characteristic of her mode and conversation. Her ankles had long before that grown too sightly to be exhibited. Such is so-called civilization! Her hair seemed to darken before one's eyes. The oval of her face attracted the attention of more than one of my artist friends.

" At seventeen she had learned what styles of attire, what arrangements of her hair, were best suited to display effectively her comeliness.

" This was one of the greatest steps of all.

" The simplest draperies, she found, the least

complicated headgear, were most advantageous to her appearance.

" A taste for reading the most ideal and artistic of books, as well as her liking for poetry, the theatre, music, and pictures had implanted that exalted something in her face which cannot be otherwise acquired.

" When she was eighteen people on the street turned to look at her as she passed.

" At nineteen her figure was unsurpassable. Indeed, I think there cannot be a more beautiful and charming woman in America. She is now twenty.

" It was my privilege to view closely the bursting of this bud into bloom."

The fin de siècle versewright became silent and lighted a fresh cigarette.

" Will you permit me to ask," said I, " what were the especial facilities that you had for observing this evolution? "

" Yes," he answered, softly, a tender look coming into his eyes. " She is my wife. She was thirteen when I married her. Suddenly placed without means of subsistence, knowing nothing of the world, she came to me. I could see no other way. We are very happy together."

The pretty narrative of the rhymer put each

of us in a delectable mood. The notes of a harp and violins came from the lower deck in the form of a seductive Italian melody. White sails dotted the far-reaching sea.

A MAN WHO WAS NO GOOD

XIX

A MAN WHO WAS NO GOOD

HEARKEN to the tale of how fortune fell to the widow of Busted Blake.

The outcome has shown that "Busted" was not radically bad. But he was wretchedly weak of will to reject an opportunity of having another drink with the boys — or with the girls — or with anybody or with nobody.

In the days of his ascendency, when he was a young and newly married architect, he was a buyer of drinks for others. Waiters in cafés vied with each other in showing readiness to take his orders. He was rated a jolly good fellow then. No one would have supposed it destined that some fine night a leering barroom wit should reply to his whispered application for a small loan by pouring a half-glass of whiskey upon his head and saying:

"I hereby christen thee 'Busted.'"

The title stuck. Blake, through continued

impecuniosity, lost all shame of it in time; lost, too, his self-respect and his wife. Mrs. Blake, a gentle and pretty little brunette, had wedded him against the will of her parents. She had trusted, for his safety, to the allurements of his future, which everybody said was bright, and to his love for her.

The years of tearful nights, the pleadings, the reproaches, the seesaw of hope and despair, need not here be dwelt upon. They would make an old story, and some of the details might be shocking to the young person. They reached a culmination one day when she said to him:

"You love drink better than you love me. I have done with you."

She was a woman and took a woman's view of the case.

When he came back to their rooms that night, she was not there. Then he knew how much he loved her and how much he had underestimated his love.

She did not go to her parents. There was a very musty proverb that she knew would meet her on the threshold. "You made your bed, now lie on it." Her father was a man of no originality, hence he would have put it in that way.

She got employment in a photograph gallery,

where she made herself useful by being ornamental, sitting behind a desk in the anteroom.

I know not what duties devolve upon the woman who occupies that post in the average photographer's service; whatever they are she performed them. But within a very short time after she had left the "bed and board" of Busted Blake, she had to ask for a vacation. She spent it in a hospital and Busted became a father. She resumed her chair behind the photographer's desk in due time, found a boarding-house where infants were not tabooed, and managed to subsist, and to care for her child — a girl.

Somebody lived in that boarding-house who knew Busted Blake, and it was through inquiries resulting from this somebody's jocularly calling him "papa" one night in a saloon that Busted was made aware of his accession to the paternal relation.

When the poor wretch heard the news, he made a prodigious effort to keep his face composed. But the muscles would not be resisted. He burst out crying, and he laid his head upon his arm upon a beer-flooded table and wept copiously, causing a sudden hush to fall upon the crowd of topers and a group to gather around his table and

stare at him, — some mystified, some grinning, none understanding.

The next day he made a herculean effort to pull himself together. He obtained a position as draughtsman from one who had known him in his respectable period, and he went tremblingly and sheepishly to call upon his wife and child.

The consequence of his visit was a reunion, which endured for two whole weeks. At the end of that time she cast him off in utter scorn.

How he lived for the next two years can be only known to those who are familiar through experience with the existence of people who ask other people on the street for a few cents toward a night's lodging. By those who knew him he was said to be " no good to himself or any one else." He acquired the raggedness, the impudence, the phraseology of the vagabond class. He would hang on the edge of a party of men drinking together in front of a bar, on the slim chance of being " counted in " when the question went round, " What'll you have? " He was perpetually being impelled out of saloons at foot-race speed by the officials whose function it is, in barrooms, to substitute an objectionable person's room for his company.

One winter Sunday morning he slept late on a

bench in a public square. Awakened by an officer, he arose to go. Hazy in head and stiff at joints, he slightly staggered. He heard behind him the cooing laugh of a child. He looked around. It was himself that had awakened the infant's mirth — or that strange something which precedes the dawn of a sense of humour in children. The smiling babe was in a child's carriage which a plainly dressed woman was pushing. He looked at the woman. It was his wife and the pretty child was his own.

He walked rapidly from the place, and on the same day he decided to leave the city. He had herded with vagrants of the touring class. The methods of free transportation by means of freight-trains and free living, by means of beggary and small thievery in country towns, were no secret to him. He walked to the suburbs, and at night-fall he scrambled up the side of a coal-car in a train slowly moving westward.

What hunger he suffered, what cold he endured, what bread he begged, what police station cells he passed nights in, what human scum he associated with, what thirst he quenched, and with what incredibly bad whiskey, are particulars not for this unobjectionable narrative, for do they not belong to low life? And who nowadays can tolerate low

life in print unless it be redeemed by a rustic environment and a laboured exposition of clodhopper English and primitive expletives? Low life outside of a dialect story and a dreary village? Never!

Mrs. Blake and the child lived in a fair degree of comfort upon the mother's wages, but often the mother shuddered at thought of what might happen should she ever lose her position at the photographer's.

Consumption had its hold on Busted Blake when he arrived in the mining-town called Get-there City, in Kansas, one evening. Get-there City had not gotten there beyond a single straggling street of shanties. But it had acquired a saloon, although liquor-selling had already been forbidden in Kansas.

Busted Blake, with ten cents in his clothes, entered the saloon and asked in an asthmatic voice for as much whiskey as that sum was good for.

While awaiting a response, his eyes turned toward the only other persons in the saloon, — three burly, bearded miners of the conventional big-hatted, big-booted, and big-voiced type. Above their heads and against the wall was this

sign, lettered roughly with charcoal, under a crudely drawn death's head:

"Five thousand dollars will be paid by the undersigned to the widow of the sneaking hound that informs on this saloon. This is no meer bluf. P. GIBBS."

Blake, after a brief coughing fit, looked up at the man behind the bar, — a great thick-necked fellow with a mien of authority, and yet with a certain bluff honesty expressed about his eyes and lips. This man, whose air of proprietorship convinced Blake that he could be none other than P. Gibbs, had first looked sneeringly at the ten cents, but had shown some small sign of pity on hearing the ominous cough of the attenuated vagrant. He set forth a bottle and glass.

"Help yerself," said P. Gibbs. While Blake was doing so, Mr. Gibbs went on:

"Bad cough o' yourn. Y' mightn't guess it, but that same cough runs in my fam'ly. It took off a brother, but it skipped me."

Here was a bond of sympathy between the big, law-defying saloon-keeper and the frail toper from the East. Busted Blake drained his glass and presently coughed again. P. Gibbs again

set forth the bottle, and this time he drank with Blake. Before long, by dint of repeated fits of coughing on the part of Blake, the sympathy of P. Gibbs was so worked upon that he invited the three miners in the saloon to join him and the stranger.

Blake slept in a corner of the saloon that night. He left the next morning, a curious expression of resolution on his face.

During the next three weeks he was now and then alluded to in P. Gibbs's saloon as the " coughing stranger."

In the middle of the third week, at nine o'clock in the evening, when the lamps in P. Gibbs's saloon were exerting their smallest degree of dimness and the bar was doing a good business, the door opened and in staggered Busted Blake. His staggering on this occasion was manifestly not due to drink. His face had the hideous concavities of a starved man and the uncertainty of his gait was the token of a mortal feebleness. His emaciation was painful to behold. His eyes glowed like huge gems.

The crowd of miners looked at him with surprise as he entered.

" The coughing stranger! " cried one.

" The coffin stranger, you mean," said another.

Busted Blake lurched over to the bar. His eyes met those of P. Gibbs on the other side, and the latter reached for a whiskey-bottle.

Blake fumbled in his pocket and brought forth a piece of soiled paper, which he laid on the bar under the glance of P. Gibbs.

"Keep that!" said Blake, in a husky voice, whose service he compelled with much effort. "And keep your word, too! That's where you'll find her."

P. Gibbs picked up the paper.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"That woman's name there. It's the name of my widow; the address, too, of a photograph man who will tell you where she is. Get the money to her quick, before the governor and the troops comes down on you to close you up. And don't let her know how it comes about. Pick a man to take it to her, — let him pay his expenses out of it, — a man you can trust, and make him tell her I made it somehow, mining or something, so she'll take it. You know."

P. Gibbs, who had listened with increasing amazement, opened wide his eyes and drew his revolver. He spoke in a strangely low, repressed voice:

"Stranger, do you mean to say — "

"Yes, that's it," shrieked Busted Blake, turning toward the crowd of intensely interested onlookers. "And I call on all you here to witness and to hold him to his word. That's no mere bluff he says in his notice there, and I'm the sneaking hound that informed. My widow is entitled to $5,000. I did it in Topeka, and for proof, see this newspaper."

P. Gibbs fired a shot from his revolver through the newspaper that Blake pulled from his shirt. Then the saloon-keeper brought his weapon on a level with Blake's face.

"It's good your boots is on!" said P. Gibbs, ironically.

But he did not fire. Blake stood perfectly still, awaiting the shot, and feebly laughing.

So the two remained for some moments, until Blake suddenly sank to the floor, quite exhausted. He died within a half-hour on the saloon floor, his head resting in the palm of P. Gibbs, who knelt by his side and tried to revive him.

At the next dawn, a man whom they called Big Andy started East, and the piece of paper that Blake handed to P. Gibbs was not all that he took with him. The United States marshal arrived and duly closed Gibbs's saloon, which reopened very shortly afterward, minus the $5,000 offer.

"BLAKE STOOD PERFECTLY STILL."

And Big Andy found the widow of Busted Blake, to whom he told a bit of fiction in accounting for the legacy conveyed by him to her that would have imposed upon the most incredulous legatee. When she had recovered from the surprise of finding herself and her child provided with the means of surviving the possible loss of her situation, she forgave the late Busted, and there was a flow of tears unusual to a boarding-house parlour and unnerving to Big Andy.

Presently she asked Andy whether he knew what her husband's last words had been.

"Yep," said Andy. "I heard'm plain and clear. Pete Gibbs, — the other executor of the will, you know, — Pete says, 'It's all right, pardner, me and Andy'll see to it,' and then your husband says, 'Thank Gawd I've been some good to her and the child at last.'"

Which account was entirely correct. When Big Andy had returned to Get-there City, and related how he had performed his mission, he added:

"I'd been such a lovely liar all through, it's a shame I had to go an' spoil the story by puttin' in some truth at the finish."

They put up a wooden grave-mark where Blake

was buried, and after his name they cut in the wood this testimonial:

"A tenderfoot that was some good to his folks at last."

MR. THORNBERRY'S ELDORADO

XX

MR. THORNBERRY'S ELDORADO

NEAR the uneven road among the hills a small field of stony ground lay between woods and cultivated land. Nothing grew upon it and no house could be seen from it. The sun beat upon it and crows flew over it to and from the woods.

Along the road trudged a thin old negro with stooping back and gray wool. His knees were bent and his cumbrously shod feet pointed far outward from his line of progress. He wore an aged frock coat and a battered stiff hat, although the month was June. His small face, beginning with a smoothly curved forehead and ending with a cleanly cut chin, was mild and conciliating, shiny, and of the colour of light chocolate. He carried a tin bucket full of cherries. Pop Thornberry was returning to the town.

Pop, whose proper name was Moses, and who was a deacon in the African Methodist Church, made his living this way and that way. He did

odd jobs for people, and he fished and hunted when fishing and hunting were in season.

On this June day he had risen early and walked three miles to pick cherries "on shares." He had picked ten quarts and left four of them with the farmer whose trees had produced them. At six cents a quart he would profit thirty-six cents by his walk of six miles and his work of a half-day.

The sun was scorching and Pop was tired. He decided to rest in the barren field, at its very edge in shade of the woods. He climbed the zigzag fence with some labour and at the expense of a few of his cherries. He sat down upon a little knob of earth, took off his hat, drew a red handkerchief from the inside thereof, and slowly wiped his perspiring brow.

He looked up at the sky, which was so brightly blue that it made his eyes blink. He sought optical relief in the dark green of the woods. Then, in steadying his pail of cherries between his legs, he turned his glance to the ground in front of him.

His attention was caught by a lump of earth that sparkled at points in the sun's rays, a mere clod composed of clay and mica, lying in the dry bed of a bygone streamlet. Because it glittered he picked it up and examined it. After a time he

bethought him that he was yet two and a half miles from town and very hungry. He arose, somewhat stiff, and put the shining clod in his coat-tail pocket. On his way back to the road he noticed other little earth lumps that shone. He resumed his walk townward, his knees shaking regularly at every step, as was their wont.

At three o'clock in the afternoon he had reached home, sold his cherries, and dined on dried beef and bread in his little unpainted wooden house on the edge of the creek at the back of the town.

He owned his house and a small lot upon which it stood. Near it was a flour-mill, whose owner held a mortgage upon Pop's house and lot. The old negro had been compelled to borrow $200 to pay bills incurred during the illness and subsequent funeral of the late Mrs. Thornberry, and thus to avoid a sheriff's sale. Hence came the mortgage. It would expire on the 10th of September. Pop was almost ready to meet that date. He already had $192 hidden in his cellar, unknown to any one.

He had heard rumours of the mill-owner's desire to build an addition to his mill. To do this would necessitate the acquisition of contiguous property. But Pop had not suspected any

ulterior motive when the miller had offered to lend him the money.

"I kin soon lay by 'nuff t' pay off d' mohgage, w'en I ain't got no one but m'se'f t' puvvide foh no moah," he had said, after the loan had been made.

And, having dined on this June day, he took twenty cents from the amount received for cherries and placed it in a cigar-box to be added to the $192. He kept that sixteen cents with which to purchase provisions for to-morrow, and then he walked down the quiet street to the railway station. He often made a dime by carrying some one's satchel from the station to the hotel.

The railroad division superintendent, a well-fed and easy-going man, came down from his office on the second floor of the station building and saw Pop sitting on a baggage-truck. The old negro, forgetful of the clod in his coat-tail pocket, had felt it when he sat down. He had taken it out of his pocket and was now casually looking at it as he held it in his hand.

"Hello, Pop!" said the division superintendent, upon whose hand time was hanging heavily. "What have you there?"

"Doan' know, Mistah Monroe. Doan' know, sah. Looks like jes' a chunk o' mud."

He held out the clod to Mr. Monroe.

The spectacle of the division superintendent talking to the old negro attracted a group of lazy fellows, — the driver of an express wagon, the man who hauls the mail to the post-office, a boy who sold fruit to passengers on the train, two porters, with tin signs upon their hats, who solicited patronage from the hotels.

" Why, Pop," said the superintendent, winking to the expressman, " this lump looks as though it contained gold."

" Yes," put in the expressman, " that's how gold comes in a mine. I've often handled it. That's the stuff, sure."

The fruit-selling boy and the mail-man grinned. Pop Thornberry opened wide his mouth and eyes and softly repeated the word:

" Goal! "

" I'd be careful of it," advised Mr. Monroe, handing the clod back to the negro.

Pop took it with a trembling hand and looked at it. Presently he asked:

" W'at'll you give me foh dat air goal, Mistah Monroe."

" Oh, a piece like that would be no use to me. It has to be washed and it wouldn't be worth while putting just one piece through the whole

process of cleaning. Now, if you have a lot of it, we might go into partnership in the gold business."

Before the old man could answer to this pleasantry a whistle was heard up the track, and Pop was forgotten in the excitement attending the arrival of the train.

Dislodged from the baggage-truck, the old man looked around for Mr. Monroe, but the superintendent had disappeared. Pop did not seek to carry any satchels that day. His mind was full of other matters. He went behind the station and sat down beside the river.

"Goal!" That meant proper tombstones for the graves of his wife and children, a new pulpit for the African Methodist Church, equal to that of the African Baptist Church, future ease for his somewhat weary legs and arms and back.

The next afternoon the division superintendent found himself awaited at his office door by Pop Thornberry, who was very dusty and who carried a basket heavy with clods of clay and mica. He had been out to the arid field that morning.

"H-sh!" whispered Pop. "Doan' say a word, Mistah Monroe! Hyah's a lot o' dem air goal lumps, and I know weah dey's bushels moah, — plenty 'nuff to go into pahtnehship on."

The superintendent looked bewildered, then

amused, then ashamed. Embarrassed for a reply, he finally said:

"I haven't time to talk to you now, Pop. Besides, I've made up my mind not to go into the gold business. You see, I'm rich enough already. Good day."

Thereafter Pop lay in wait for Mr. Monroe daily, but the superintendent always avoided him. Pop neglected to earn his living and spent his time going about town with his basket of clods in search of the superintendent. Finally being openly ignored by Mr. Monroe when the two met face to face, Pop became angry and took his secret to a jeweller on Main Street. The jeweller laughed and told Pop that the gold in the basket must be worth at least a thousand dollars, but he was not in a position to buy crude gold. Then the jeweller made known to many that Pop Thornberry was crazy over some lumps of mud and mica that he mistook for gold.

After that, people would stop Pop on the street and say:

"Let's see a piece of the gold in your basket."

Pop, astonished that his secret was out, but somewhat proud at being thought the possessor of a treasure, would hesitate and then comply.

The small boys soon recognized in Pop's delusion a new means of fun. Observing the solicitude with which he watched his clod while out of his own hands, they would innocently ask for a glimpse into his basket. This granted, they would grasp a piece of his treasure and run away, greatly annoying the old man, who was in a state of keen distress until he recovered the abstracted clod. These affairs between Pop and the boys were of hourly recurrence. They diverted bar-room loungers and passers-by.

Pop called on one local capitalist after another, seeking one who would buy his gold or aid into preparing it for the market. All laughed at his delusion, deeming it harmless, and all gave him good reason for not accepting his offer of business partnership. So he went from the bank president to the baker, from the member of congress for whom he had voted to the barber, from the hotel proprietor to the bartender. The negroes of the town, feeling that their race was humiliated in Pop, began to hold aloof from him. No serious-minded person who learned of his delusion gave it a second thought.

"Say Pop, where do you get this gold, anyhow?" asked a tobacco-chewing gamin at the railroad station one day.

"Dat's my business," replied Thornberry, with some dignity.

"Oh," said his questioner, "I know. Tobe McStenger followed you out the other day and saw where you got it. He'd a brung some in hisself, but it wasn't on his property."

"Yes, Pop, you better look out," put in a telegraph operator, "or you'll be taken up for trespassing. 'Tisn't your land, you know, where you find your gold."

There was no truth in the assertion of the gamin. No one had taken the trouble to follow Pop in his semiweekly excursions to the barren field. But the old man knew that the field was not his. A ludicrous expression of overwhelming fright came over his face.

Three days afterward, the farmer who owned the worthless field was astonished when Pop offered to buy it.

"But what on earth do you want that land fer?" asked the farmer, sitting on his barnyard fence.

Pop made a guilty attempt to appear guileless, and told the farmer that he wished to build a shanty and raise potatoes. He was tired of living in town and sought the quietude of the hills.

"Bein' as dat ere fiel' ain't good foh much, I

thought you might be willin' to paht with it," explained Pop.

The farmer eventually agreed to build a shanty on the field and sell it to Pop for $180. Pop desired immediate occupancy. There was a legal hitch, owing to the badness of the land and the questionable condition of Pop's mind. But the transfer of the property was finally recorded.

Pop no longer had to fear arrest for trespass. His gold field was now legally his. But he was still kept uneasy by his inability to make his gold marketable. His uneasiness increased as September approached. He had applied to the purchase of the field the sum saved to cancel the mortgage upon his house at the rear end of the town.

The three days before the foreclosure of the mortgage were days of exquisite anguish to Pop. When the foreclosure came and he and his goods were turned out on the banks of the creek to make room for the mill-owner's improvements, his mental turmoil ended. He took the crisis calmly.

"Jes' wait," he said to a neighbour who had stopped at sight of the moving-out. "Wait till I get dat ere goal on de mahket. I'll buil' a mill dat'll drive dis yer mill out o' d' business. Den I'll done buy back dis yer ol' home."

But the next day, when the unexpected happened, — when builders began to tear down his house, — the enormity of his deed dawned upon him. After a day of moaning and staring, as he sat amidst his household goods on the bank of the creek, he became animated by a deep rage against the mill-owner. Now more than ever had he a special purpose for enriching himself by means of his treasure across the hill.

The coming of two circuses in succession had taken the interest of the boys away from Pop during August and part of September. Now they turned again to him for amusement. First they besieged the abandoned stable to which he had conveyed his goods, and in which he slept, — for he had not found will to betake himself from the town he had so long inhabited, and his shanty in the field remained unoccupied. His purchase of the land had betrayed to general knowledge the location of his treasure, of which he continued to bring in new specimens.

One October day he had just come from vainly attempting to induce the postmaster to join him in the enterprise of exploiting his gold-field. In front of the post-office, he was met by some boys coming noisily from school. They surrounded him and demanded to see the gold in

his basket. As the town policeman was sauntering up the street, Pop felt safe in refusing. The boys, also observing the officer of the law, contented themselves with retaliating in words only.

"Say, Pop," cried one of them, "you'd better keep an eye on your gold-field. Nick Hennessey knows where it is, and he's gittin' up a diggin' party to take a wagon out some night and bring away all your gold."

The boys, laughing at this quickly invented announcement, ran off after a hand-organ. The old man stood perfectly still, or as nearly so as the feebleness of his legs would permit.

That evening Pop was missing from the town. And when Abraham Wesley, who had often lent his shotgun to the old man, went to look for that weapon, intending to shoot glass balls in the fair-grounds across the river, the fowling-piece too was missing.

Pop had gone out to protect his possession. Three nights passed and three days. The few country folk and others who travelled that way during this time saw the old man walking about in his field or sitting in front of his shanty, his shotgun on his shoulders, his eyes fixed suspiciously on all who might become intruders. Night and day he patrolled his little domain.

"NIGHT AND DAY HE PATROLLED HIS LITTLE DOMAIN."

At dusk of the third day a lively party was returning to the town in a wagon from a search for nuts. The full moon was rising and the merry-makers were singing. One of the girls was thirsty. When she saw the shanty in the rugged field, she asked a young man to get her a glass of water at the hut. The wagon stopped and the youth climbed astride the rail fence. Suddenly an unnaturally shrill and excited voice was heard:

" Hyah, you, doan' come no farder! Dese yer's my premises! "

From behind the empty shanty appeared the thin old negro, bareheaded, his shotgun at his shoulder, a striking figure against the rising moon.

The young man descended from the fence into the field. There came a flash and a crack from Pop Thornberry's gun. The youth felt the sting of a piece of birdshot in his leg. Howling and limping, he turned quickly over the fence into the wagon, which made a hasty flight.

The next morning some idlers went out from the town to the scene of the adventure. They found the old man lying hatless in the middle of the field, face downwards, upon the shotgun. He had died of sheer exhaustion, on guard — and on his own land, as befit an honest citizen who had never intruded upon the peace of other men.

AT THE STAGE DOOR

XXI

AT THE STAGE DOOR [1]

FIRST let me explain how I came to be sitting in so unsavoury a place as Gorson's "fifteen cent oyster and chop house" that night. Most newspaper men — the rank and file — receive remuneration by the week. Those not given over to domesticity, those who enjoy that alluring regularity identical with liberty, fare sumptuously, as a rule, on "pay-day." Thereafter the quantity and quality of the good things of life that they enjoy diminish daily until the next pay-day.

Pay-day with us was Friday. This was Thursday night. I having gone to unusual lengths of good cheer in the early part of that week, had now fallen low, and was duly thankful for what I could get — even at Gorson's.

As my glance wandered over my table, over the beer-bottles and the oysters, beyond the crowd

[1] Courtesy of *Lippincott's Magazine*. Copyright, 1892, by J. B. Lippincott Company.

of ravenous and vulgar eaters and hurrying waiters, to the street door, some one opened that door from the outside and entered. An odd looking personage this some one.

A person very tall and conspicuously thin. These peculiarities were accentuated by the dilapidated frock coat that reached to his knees, and thus concealed the greater portion of his gray summer trousers, which "bagged" exceedingly and were picturesquely frayed at the bottom edges, as I could see when he came nearer to me. He wore a faded straw hat, which looked forlorn, as the month was January. His face, despite its angularity of outline and its wanness, had that expression of complacency which often relieves from pathos the countenances of harmlessly demented people. His hair was gray, but his somewhat formidable looking moustache was still dark. He carried an unadorned walking-stick and under his left arm was what a journalistic eye immediately recognized as manuscript. From the man's aspect of extreme poverty, I deduced that his manuscripts were never accepted.

As he passed the cashier's desk, he stopped, lowered his body, not by stooping in the usual way, but by bending his knees, and with a quick sweep of his eyes by way of informing himself

whether or not he was observed, he picked up a cigar stump that some one had dropped there.

Then he walked with a rather shambling but self-important gait to the table next mine, carefully placed his manuscript upon a chair, and sat down upon it. He was soon lost in a prolonged contemplation of the limited bill of fare posted on the wall, a study which resulted in his ordering, through a hustling, pugnacious-looking waiter, a bowl of oatmeal.

A bowl of oatmeal is the least expensive item on the bill of fare at Gorson's. When I hear a man ordering oatmeal in a cheap eating-house, my heart aches for him. I had just the money and the intention to procure another bottle of beer and another box of cigarettes. The sum required to obtain these necessaries of life is exactly the price of a bowl of oatmeal and a steak at Gorson's. So I hastily arose to go, and on my way out I had a brief conversation with the bellicose-appearing waiter, which resulted in my unknown friend's being overwhelmed with amazement later when the waiter brought him a warm steak with his oatmeal and said that some one else had already paid his bill. I did not wait to witness this result, for the man looked one of the sort to put forth a

show of indignation at being made an object of charity.

An hour later I saw him walking with an air of consequence up Broadway, smoking what was probably the bit of cigar he had picked up in the restaurant. He still carried his manuscript, which was wrapped in a soiled blue paper. As I was hurrying up-town on an assignment for the newspaper, I could not observe his movements further than to see that when he reached Fourteenth Street he made for one of the benches in Union Square.

It was by the size, shape, and blue cover that I recognized that manuscript two days later upon the desk of the editor of the Sunday supplementary pages of the paper, as I was submitting to that personage a "special" I had written upon the fertile theme, "Producing a Burlesque."

"May I ask what that stuff is wrapped in blue?"

"Certainly. A crank in the last stages of alcoholism and mental depression brought it in yesterday. It's an idiotic jumble about Beautiful Women of History, part in prose and part in doggerel."

"Of course you'll reject it?"

"Naturally. I'll ease his mind by telling him

the subject lacks contemporaneousness. Have a cigarette? By the way, have you any special interest in the rubbish? "

"No; I only think I've seen it before somewhere. What's the writer's name and address? "

"It's to be called for. He didn't leave any address. From that fact and his appearance, I infer that he doesn't have any permanent abode. Here's his name, — Ernest Ruddle. Not half as much individuality in the name as in the man. I remember him because he had a straw hat on."

The burlesque production which had served as material for my Sunday article saw the light for the first time on the following Monday night. There being no other theatrical novelty in New York that night, the town — represented by the critics and the sporting and self-styled Bohemian elements — was there. The performance was to have a popular comedian as the central figure, and was to serve, also, to reintroduce a once favourite comic-opera prima donna, who had been abroad for some years. This stage queen had once beheld the town at her feet. She had abdicated her throne in the height of her glory, having made the greatest success of her career on a certain Monday night, and having disap-

peared from New York on Tuesday, shortly afterward materializing in Paris.

There was abundant curiosity awaiting the appearance of Louise Moran, as the playbills called her. It was whispered, to be sure, by some who had seen her in burlesque in London, after her flight from America, that she had grown a bit passée; but this was refuted by the interviewers who had met her on her return and had duly chronicled that she looked "as rosy and youthful as ever." Brokers, gilded youth, all that curious lot of masculinity classified under the general head of "men about town," crowded into the theatre that night, and when, after being heralded at length by the chorus, the returned prima donna appeared, in shining drab tights, she had a long and noisy reception.

My friendly acquaintance with the leading comedian and the stage manager had served to obtain for me an unusual privilege, — that of witnessing the first night's performance from the wings. As I looked out across the stage and the footlights, and saw the sea of faces in the yellowish haze, a familiar visage held my eye. It was in the front row of the top gallery, and was projected far over the railing, putting its owner in some risk of decapitation. An intent look on the pale

countenance at once distinguished it from the terrace of uninteresting, monotonous faces that rose back of it. The face was that of my man of the restaurant and of the blue-covered manuscript.

I stood, somewhat in the way of the light man, where my eye could command most of the stage, and a brief section of the auditorium, from parquet to roof. The star of the evening, having rattled off, with much sang-froid and a London intonation, a few lines of thinly humourous dialogue, came toward the footlights to sing. While the conductor of the orchestra poised his baton and cast an apprehensive look at her, she began:

"I'm one of the swells
Whose accent tells
That we've done the Contenong."

When she had sung only to this point, people in the audience were exchanging significant smiles. There was no doubt of it; Louise Moran's voice had lost its beauty. The years and joys of life abroad had done their work. We now knew why she had given up comic opera and had gone into burlesque. The house was so taken by surprise that at the end of her second stanza, where applause should have come, none came. There was no occasion for her to draw upon her supply of "encore verses."

Unprepared for the chilling silence that followed her song, she bestowed upon the audience a look of mingled astonishment, pain, and resentment. But she recovered self-possession promptly and delivered the few spoken lines preceding her exit gaily enough. Her face clouded as soon as she was off the stage. She abused her maid in her dressing-room and sent the comedian's " dresser " out for some troches. The state of her mind was not improved by the sound of a hail-storm-like sound that came from the direction of the stage shortly after, — the applause at the leading comedian's entrance.

As the newspapers said the next day, the only honours of that performance were with the comedian. The star of Louise Moran had set. Not only was her singing-voice a ruin, but the actress had grown coarse in visage. The once willowy outlines of her figure had rounded vulgarly. On the face, audacity had taken place of piquancy. Even the dark gray eyes, which somehow seemed black across the footlights, had lost some lustre.

Why had the once lovely creature come back from Europe to disturb the memories of her other radiant self, and to turn those dainty photographs of her earlier person into lies?

Every man in the house was thinking this question at the end of the first act.

She had another solo to sing in the second act. It was while she was attempting this that my glance strayed to the man in the gallery. His face this time surprised me.

It wore a look of ineffable sympathy and sorrow. Surely tears were falling from the sad eyes.

This pity touched me. It was so solitary. The feeling of the rest of the audience was plainly one of resentful derision at being disappointed.

After the performance I waited for the comedian. He was called before the curtain and a speech was extorted from him. There were but a few faint cries for the actress, to which she did not respond. She had summoned the manager to her dressing-room. While she hastily assumed her wraps for the street, she was excitedly complaining of the musical director " for not knowing his business," the comedian for " interfering " in her scenes, the composer for writing the music too high, and the librettist for supplying such " beastly rubbish " in the way of dialogue.

" Very well; I'll call a rehearsal to-morrow at ten," the conciliatory manager replied. " You talk to Myers " (the musical director) " yourself about it. And you can introduce those two

songs you speak of. Myers will fix the other music to suit your voice."

"And you start Elliott to write over the libretto at once," she commanded, "and see that that song and dance clown" (the comedian) "never comes on the stage when I'm on, if it can be helped, or I won't go on at all. That's settled!"

The comedian and I left the stage door together. The actress's cab was waiting at the opposite side of the dark alley-like street upon which the stage door opened. This street or court, stretching its gloomy way from a main street, is a place of tall warehouses, rear walls, and bad paving. The electric light at its point of junction with the main street does not penetrate half-way to the stage entrance, and the blackness thereabout is diluted with the rays of the lonely, indifferent gas-lamp that projects above the old wooden door. Farther on, an old-fashioned street-lamp marks the place where the alley turns to wind about until it eventually reaches another main street.

This dark region, the feeble lamp above the stage door, the shadows opposite, have a peculiar charm, especially at night. One would not think that within that door is a short corridor leading to the mystic realm which the people "in front"

idealize into a wonderful inaccessible country, the playworld. Back here, especially on a rainy night and before the playworld's inhabitants begin to sally forth to partake of terrestrial beer and sandwiches, one seems millions of miles away from the crowds of men and women in the theatre and from the illumined street in front.

The ordinary world, when passing this strange place, peers in curiously from the main street. Sometimes folks wait at the corner of the street to see the stage people come out. If the piece is a burlesque or a comic opera, much life moves in the darkness back here. Light comes from the up-stairs windows of the theatre, the dressing-rooms of the subordinate players being up there. Snatches of song from feminine throats, mere trills sometimes, isolated fragments of melody, break into the silence. These are always numerous during the half-hour after the performance and before the actors have left the theatre. Chorus girls in ulsters emerge in troops, usually by twos, from the door beneath the light, and it is constantly opening and shutting. In the gloom opposite the door hover a few bold youths, suddenly become timid, smoking cigarettes and trying to look like men of the world. As the comedian and I came forth, one of these young men

struck a match to light a cigarette. The momentary flash attracted my eye, and I saw in the farthest shadow, with his gaze upon the stage door, my man of the restaurant, and the manuscript, and the gallery. If possible, he looked more haggard than before, and, as it was cold, he shivered perceptibly.

"Whom can he be waiting for, I wonder?" I said, aloud.

The comedian, thinking that I alluded to the cabman, half-asleep upon his seat, replied, as he turned up the collar of his overcoat:

"Oh, he's waiting for Miss Moran. She didn't always go home from the theatre in a cab. She acquired the habit abroad, I suppose. How she's changed. I knew her in other days."

"Really? I didn't know that. Tell me about her."

"It's a common story. She's the result of a mercenary mother's schemes. She's not as old as people think, you know. Her career has been aventful, which makes it seem long. But I was in the cast, playing a small part in the first play she ever appeared in, and that was only twelve years ago. She was about twenty-one then. She waited on customers in her mother's little stationery store, until one day she eloped with a poor

young fellow whom she loved, in order to escape a rich old man whom her mother had selected for a son-in-law. She could have endured poverty well enough, if the mother hadn't done the 'I - forgive - and - Heaven - bless - you - my - children' act, after which she succeeded in making the girl quarrel with her husband continually. She was a schemer, that mother. A theatrical manager, whom she knew, was introduced to the girl, who was more beautiful then than ever afterward. The mother managed to have the girl's husband discharged from the bank where he was employed on the same day that the manager made the girl an offer to go on the stage. The boy naturally wanted to keep his wife with him, but the mother told him he was a fool.

"'I'll travel with her,' she said, 'and you stay here and get another situation.' The wife, intoxicated at the prospects of stage triumphs, urged, and the boy gave in.

"A year or so after that, the girl had drifted completely out of the husband's life, as they say in society plays, the mother managed to bring about the estrangement so promptly.

"The husband stayed at home and got work in a railroad office or somewhere, so as to earn money with which to drink himself to death —

I say, let's go in here and eat. If we go to the club, I'll be bored to death with congratulations."

We turned into a lighted vestibule and mounted the stairs to a modest little café over a Broadway saloon. There, over the cigars and Pilsner presently the comedian continued the story:

"When the husband learned that to his charming mother-in-law's machinations he owed the loss of his position and his wife, he bided his time, like a sensible fellow, and one day he called upon the old lady at her flat. Without a word, he proceeded to pull out much of her hair and otherwise to disfigure her permanently, which, as she was a vain woman, made her miserable the rest of her days. Then he disappeared, and has not been heard of since. It seems strange the thing never got into the newspapers. By the way, you won't print this story, my boy, until she or I leave the profession."

"Why not? Are you the only man who knows it?"

"No; it was general gossip in the profession at that time."

"How did you get it so straight?"

"She told me. I knew her well in those days. Oh, use the story if you like, only don't credit it

to me. She's very mad because I made a hit tonight and she didn't."

"But what was the name of her husband?"

"Poor devil! — his name was — what was it, anyhow? By Jove, I can't think of it! It'll come back to me, though, and I'll let you know later. He had literary aspirations, by the way. She used to laugh at the poetry he had written about her. Poor boy!"

The next night, radical changes having been effected in the burlesque, the prima donna made a more creditable showing. I happened to be at the stage door again when she came out with her maid after the performance, as I had under my guidance one of the newspaper's artists, who had been making some sketches of life behind the scenes. She was in a gayer mood than that in which she had been on the previous night.

As she was entering the cab, I heard a muffled exclamation, which came from the shadow opposite the stage door. Dimly in that shadow could be seen a form with arms outstretched toward the woman, as in an involuntary gesture. The cab rolled away. The form emerged from the darkness and wearily strode by. It was that of my manuscript man. He had the same straw hat, stick, and frock coat.

"That queer old chap must be really in love with her," I thought, smiling. Such things often happen. I knew a gallery god — but that will keep. Evidently here was an amusing case, not without its aspect of pathos.

Being in that vicinity on the following night, I strolled up to the stage door, merely to see whether the straw hat would be there again. There it was, patiently waiting, scourged by the most ferocious of January winds.

Doubtless the man came here every night to catch a glimpse of his divinity. He was quite unobtrusive, and I was probably the only one who noticed his constant attendance. I learned at the newspaper office that he had called for the rejected manuscript bearing his name, — Ernest Ruddle. Then for a time I neither saw nor thought of him.

One night, in the last of January, — the coldest of that savage winter, — I happened again to be in the corridor leading to the stage door, having come from within the theatre in advance of my friend the comedian, with whom I was to have supper at the Actors' Athletic Club. The actress's cab was waiting. The dark little portion of the world back there was deserted.

Along the corridor, through which the sound

of chorus girls' laughter came, strolled the comedian, his cigar already lighted and behind it his cheerful, hearty, smooth-shaven visage appearing ruddy from the recent washing off of "make-up."

"Hello!" he began, thrusting his hand into his overcoat pockets. "By the way, while I think of it, I just passed Miss Moran coming from the dressing-room, and suddenly that name came back to me, the name of her husband. It was a peculiar name, — Ernest Ruddle."

Ernest Ruddle! the name on the manuscript! The man of the restaurant and the gallery, the tears, the waiting at the stage door, were explained now. Ere we reached the stage door, the actress herself appeared in the corridor, on the arm of her maid. She was laughing, rather coarsely. We stepped aside to let her pass out into the night.

"So the manager said he'd give me $50 more on the road," she was saying, "and I said he would have to make it $75 more — gracious! what's this?"

She had stumbled over something just outside the threshold of the stage door. Her companion stooped, while the actress jumped aside and looked down at the large black object with both fright and curiosity.

" It's a man," said the maid; " drunk, or asleep, or dead. He looks frozen. He's a tramp, I guess; hurry away! We'll tell the policeman on the corner."

The actress passed on, with a final look of half-aversion, half-pity, at the prostrate body. The comedian and I were both by that body within two seconds.

" Frozen or starved, sure! " said the comedian. " Poor beggar! Look at his straw hat. Observe his death-clutch on the cane."

From down the alley came two sounds: one was a policeman's approaching footsteps; the other, of a woman's laughter. What, to be sure, was the dead or drunken body of an unknown vagabond to her?

And it seems strange that I, who never exchanged speech with either the woman or the man, was the only one in the world who might recognize in the momentary contact of the living with the dead, a dramatic situation.

"POOR YORICK"

XXII

"POOR YORICK" [1]

THE name by which he was indicated on the playbills was Overfield. His real name was buried in the far past. By several members of the company to which he belonged he was often called "Poor Yorick."

I asked the leading juvenile of the company — young Bridges, who was supposed to attract women to the theatre, and for whose glorification "The Lady of Lyons" was sometimes revived at matinées — how the old man had acquired the nickname.

"I gave it to him myself last season," replied Bridges, loftily. "Can't you guess why? You remember the graveyard scene in 'Hamlet.' The skull of Yorick, you know, had lain in the earth three and twenty years. Yorick had been dead that long. Well, the old man had been dead for

[1] Courtesy of *Lippincott's Magazine*. Copyright, 1892, by J. B. Lippincott Company.

about the same length of time, — professionally dead, I mean. See? "

It was true that, so far as being known by the world went, the old man was as good, or as bad, as dead. He no longer played other than quite unimportant parts.

It was said by some one that he was the poorest actor and the noblest man in the country; a statement commended by Jennison, an Englishman who usually played villains, to this, that his were the worst art and best heart in the profession.

Poor Yorick was a thin man, with a smooth, gentle face, lamblike blue eyes, and curling gray locks that receded gracefully from his forehead. He had just an individualizing amount of the pomposity characteristic of many old-time actors. He was not known to have any living kin. He permitted himself one weakness, a liking for whiskey, an indulgence which was never noticed to have brought appreciable harm upon him.

Once I asked him when he had made his début. He answered, " When Joe Jefferson was still young and before Billie Crane was heard of."

" In what rôle? "

" As four soldiers," he replied.

" How could that be? "

He explained that he had first appeared as a

super in a military drama, marching as a soldier. The procession, in order to create an illusion of length, had passed across the stage and back, the return being made behind the scenes four times continuously in the same direction.

The old man took uncomplainingly to the name applied to him by Bridges. He must have known what it implied, for surely he could not have mistaken himself for "a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy." His non-resentment was but an evidence of his good nature, for he was aware that it was not a very general custom of actors to give each other nicknames, and that his case was an exception.

When he was playing the insignificant part of the old family servant of a New York banker, in the most successful comedy of that season, he came to know Bridges better than ever before. Poor Yorick had little more to do in the play than to come on and turn up some light, arrange some papers on a desk, go off, and afterward return and lower the light. Bridges was doing the rôle of the bank clerk in love with the banker's daughter. Yorick and Bridges, through some set of circumstances or other, were sharers of the same dressing-room.

Upon a certain Wednesday, and after a matinée,

the two were in their dressing-room, hastily washing up their faces and putting on their street clothes. Said the old man:

"Did you notice the pretty little girl in the upper box? She reminds me of — " here his voice fell and took on suddenly a tone of sadness — "of some one I knew once, long ago."

Bridges, drying his face with a towel before the big mirror, did not observe the old man's change of voice, nor did he heed the last part of the sentence.

"Notice her?" he answered, with a touch of triumphant vanity in his manner of speech. "I should say I did. She was there on my account. I'm going to make a date with her for supper after the performance to-night."

Old Overfield, sitting on a trunk, stared at Bridges in surprise.

"Do you know her?" he asked.

"No," replied the leading juvenile. "That is, I have never met her, but she's been writing me mash notes lately, asking for a meeting. In the last one she said she could get away from her house this evening, as her father's out of town and her mother is going over to Philadelphia this afternoon. So she invited me to have supper with her to-night, and was good enough to say she'd occupy that box this afternoon, so I could

see what she was like. Didn't you observe her embarrassment when I came on the stage? I paid no attention to her first letter. But, having seen her, you bet I'll answer the last one right away. Don't you wish you were me, old fellow?"

The old fellow stood up and looked at Bridges severely.

"Yes, I do wish I were you, — just long enough to see that you don't answer that girl's letter. Surely you don't mean to!"

"Hello! What have you got to do with it? Do you know the young woman?"

"No, I don't. But I can easily guess all about her. She's some romantic little girl, still pure and good, afflicted with one of those idiotic infatuations for an actor, which is sure to bring trouble to her if you don't behave like a white man. You want to show her the idiocy of writing those letters, by ignoring them. You know that actors who care to do themselves and the profession credit make it a rule never to answer a letter from a girl like that, unless to give her a word of advice. Come, my boy, don't disgrace yourself and profession. Don't spoil the life of a pretty but foolish girl who, if you do the right thing, will soon repent her silliness, and make some square young fellow a good wife."

Bridges had continued to dress himself during this long speech, assuming a show of contemptuous indignation as it progressed. When Overfield, astonished at his own eloquence, had subsided, the young man replied, in a quiet but rather insolent tone:

"Look here, old man, don't try to work the Polonius racket on me. I don't like advice, and I'm going to meet that girl, see? She arranged the whole thing herself; she's to be at a certain spot at eleven-thirty P. M. with a cab. All I've got to do is to signify my assent in a single line, which I'm going to write and send by messenger as soon as I get out of here. Of course, if the girl was a friend of yours, it would be different, but she isn't, and if you want to remain on good terms with me, you won't put in your oar. Now that's all settled."

"Is it? Well, young man, I don't want to remain on good terms with anybody I can't respect. I can't respect a man who would take advantage of a love-struck girl's ignorance of life. If you meet her, you will simply be obtaining favours on false pretences, anyhow, for you know you're not really half the fascinating, romantic, clever youth that you seem when you're on the stage speaking another man's thoughts. That girl

is probably good, and she looks like some one I used to know. If I can save her, I will, by thunder!"

"Really, old man, you're quite worked up. If you could act half that well on the stage, you'd be doing lead, instead of dusting furniture while the audience gets settled in its seats."

Old Yorick stood for a moment speechless, stung by the insult. Then he took up his hat, excitedly, and left the dressing-room without a word.

Some of the other members of the company wondered at the angry, flushed look on his face when he hurried through the corridor to the stage door. A few minutes later he was seen walking down the street, apparently much heated in mind. When he reached a certain café he went in, sat down, and called for whiskey. He remained alone in deep thought, mechanically and unconsciously answering the salutations bestowed upon him by two or three acquaintances who strolled in. Suddenly he nodded thrice, as if denoting the acquiescence of his judgment in some plan of action formed by his inventive faculty. He rose quickly, paid his bill at the cashier's desk, and moved rapidly across the street to the ——— Hotel. Passing in through a broad entrance, he

turned aside to a writing-room, where, without removing his soft hat, he sat down at a desk.

He was soon immersed in the composition of a letter, which caused him many contractions of the brow, many lapses during which he abstractedly stared at vacancy, many fresh beginnings, and the whole of the two hours allowed him before the evening's performance for dinner.

When he had finished the letter, he carefully read it, and made a few corrections. Then he folded it up, put it in an envelope, and placed it unsealed in his inside coat pocket. He arose with an expression of resolution about his eyes that was quite new there.

Ascertaining by the clock in the thronged main corridor that the time was ten minutes after seven, the old man rushed into the café, where he devoured hastily a chicken croquette, and swallowed a cup of coffee and a glass of whiskey before starting to the theatre. He was in his dressing-room and in his shirt-sleeves, touching up his eyebrows, when Bridges arrived. A cool greeting passed between the two.

"You sent the note?" asked the old man.

"What note?" gruffly queried Bridges, taking off his coat.

"To that girl."

"Most certainly."

A curious look, unobserved by Bridges, shot from Poor Yorick's eyes. It seemed to say, "Wait, things may happen that you're not looking for."

At about the time when Bridges and Yorick were dressing for the performance, a newspaper reporter, wishing to make a few notes of an interview that had been accorded him by a politician staying in the hotel at which the old man had written his long letter, went into the writing-room and made use of the desk where the actor had sat earlier in the evening. Several sheets of blank paper were scattered over it. One of them contained almost a page of writing. Yorick had negligently left it there. It was a beginning made by him before he had succeeded in obtaining a satisfactory wording for his thoughts. This rejected opening read:

"MY DEAR, FOOLISH YOUNG LADY: — Something has happened which prevents Mr. Bridges from keeping the appointment with you, and you're much better off on that account, for nothing but unhappiness can come to you if you allow yourself to be carried out of your senses by your infatuation for a man who has neither the brains

nor the manliness which he seems to have when playing parts that call for the mere simulation of these gifts. Never make an appointment with a man you do not know, especially a young and vain actor who has once got the worst of it in a divorce suit. You'll be thankful some day for this advice, for I know what I speak of. I was once, years ago, just such an actor. The woman got into all sorts of trouble because she wrote me such letters as you have written Bridges, and brought to an early end a life that might have been very happy and youthful. Looked like you, and it is a memory of what she lost and suffered that makes me wish to save you. My dear young — "

There were yet two lines to spare at the foot of the page. The newspaper man, interested by the fragment, thrust it into his pocket.

When Poor Yorick had finished his final scene in the comedy at the ——— Theatre that night, he made haste to dress and to leave the playhouse. But he loitered near the stage entrance, keeping in the shadow on the other side of the alley, out of the range of the light from the incandescent globe over the door.

Bridges was slightly surprised, on returning to his dressing-room, to find that Yorick had already

gone. But he attributed this to the ill feeling that had arisen on account of the intended meeting with the girl of the letters and the box.

The leading juvenile attired himself for the conquest carefully but rapidly. When he was ready he surveyed his reflection complacently in the long mirror, assuming the slightly languid look that he intended to maintain during the first half-hour of the supper. He retained the dress suit which he wore in the second and third act of the play, and which he rarely displayed outside of the theatre. He flattered himself that he was quite irresistible, and wondered whether she would take him to Delmonico's or to some quiet little place. He indulged, too, in some vague speculation as to what the supper might result in. The girl was evidently of a rich family, but her people would doubtless never hear of her making a match with him, that divorce affair being in recent memory. A marriage was probably out of the question. However, the girl was a beauty and this meeting was at least worth the trouble. So he donned his coat and hat and swaggered out of the theatre. He had no sooner turned from the alley upon which the stage door opened than Yorick, unnoticed by him, darted out in pursuit. Ten minutes' walking brought the leading juvenile

near the spot where he was to be awaited by the girl in the cab. Yorick, whose only means of ascertaining the place of meeting was to follow Bridges, kept as near the young actor as was compatible with safety from discovery by the latter. Bridges, strutting along unconscious of Yorick's presence a few yards behind, had half-traversed the deserted block of tall brown stone residences, when he saw a cab standing at the corner ahead of him. He quickened his pace in such a way as to warn the old man that the eventful moment was at hand. The cab stood under an electric light before an ivy-grown church.

Yorick, with noiseless steps, accelerated his gait. Bridges, as he neared the cab, deflected his course toward the curbstone and threw his head back impressively. This little action, interpreted rightly by the pursuer, was the old man's cue. Yorick suddenly rushed forward with surprising agility.

Before Bridges could be seen by the occupant of the cab for which he was making, he was dazed by a blow on the side of the head, just beneath the ear, and knocked off his feet by a sound thump on the same spot. He reeled, clutched at the air, and fell heavily upon the sidewalk. There he lay stunned and silent.

Yorick, not waiting to see what became of the man whom he had felled, dashed forward to the cab. Opening the door, he caught a momentary vision of a white, round face, with big, scared eyes, above a palpitating mass of soft silk and fur, and against a black background. He thrust toward her the letter, which he had quickly drawn from his pocket, and whispered, huskily:

"Mr. Bridges couldn't come. Here's a note."

Then he slammed the cab door, and called out in a commanding tone:

"Drive on there! Quick!"

The cabman, who had evidently received directions in advance from the girl, jerked his reins, and the cab moved forward, turned, and rattled away, the horse at a brisk trot.

Yorick speedily left the scene. At the next corner he met a policeman, to whom he said:

"There's a man lying on the sidewalk back there by the church. I don't know whether he's drunk or not."

He was off before the officer could detain him.

Bridges spent the night in a station-house, recovering from the effects of a fall, which the police attributed to drunkenness. Assuming that he had received his blows from some masculine relative or admirer of the girl, he gave a false

account of the bruises when the next night he asked the manager for a few nights of rest and enabled his understudy to obtain a chance long coveted.

The leading juvenile manifestly thought best not to attempt a renewal of a flirtation with a young woman who had so formidable a protector; and the girl herself, whatever became of her, addressed him no more epistles of adoration, or of any sort whatever.

Yorick got from the stage manager permission to change his dressing-room. Thereafter he and Bridges maintained a mutual coolness, until one day the leading juvenile, warmed by cocktails, melted, and addressed the old man familiarly by his nickname.

"Old fellow," said Bridges, over a café table, "when I come to play Hamlet, I'll send for you to act Poor Yorick. You'd do it well. You're always best, you know, in parts that don't require you to come on the stage at all."

The old man smiled grimly and then shrugged his shoulders at this pleasantry. When he died the other day, he left a curious will, in which, after naming several insignificant legacies, he bequeathed his skull "to a so-called actor, one

Charles Bridges, to be used by him in the graveyard scene when he shall have become able to play Hamlet, — if the skull be not disintegrated by that time."

COINCIDENCE

XXIII

COINCIDENCE

MAX took us down into a German place into the bowels of the earth. It was a bit of Berlin transplanted to Philadelphia and thriving beneath a Teutonic eating-house. Imagine a great cellar, with stone floor, ornamented ceiling, massive rectangular pillars of brown wood, substantial tables, heavy mediæval chairs, crossbeams bearing pictures of peasant girls and lettered with sentiments of good cheer in German, and walls covered with beer-mugs of every size and device.

Scores of men sat talking at the tables, smoking, devouring sandwiches, upturning their mugs of beer over the capacious receptacles provided by nature.

The mediæval chairs appealed to the romanticism that lies beneath Breffny's satirical exterior; and when Max called our attention to the fact

that the mugs of beer came through apertures from caves beneath the street, we were content.

For the hour, the problem of human happiness was solved for us three by three foaming mugs, three sandwiches, and tobacco.

Here communed we three, blown from various winds, to this local Bohemia: Max, native of the free German City of Frankfort, operatic manager in Rio Janeiro, musician in New York, Denver resident by adoption, Philadelphia newspaperman by preference; Breffny, born in a Spanish village, reared in Continental countries, professedly an Irishman, but more than half-Latin in temperament and appearance, a cyclopedia for the benefit of his friends, and myself.

The talk ran to the imposture recently attempted by young Mr. Herdling, who claimed that the dead body found at Tarrytown was that of his wife.

"A very touching fake," said Max.

"Yes; thanks to the skill of the reporters who wrote up his story," cried Breffny.

"We visited many morgues in search of her, Louise and I," said I, quoting the most effective passage of the narrative.

"I did know of one case of a husband starting

off at random to find his runaway wife," observed Breffny.

"As there's yet an hour to midnight, we have time for one of your stories."

"I can tell this in five minutes. All I know of the story is the beginning. No one ever heard of the end. It was like this:

"When I lived in Glasgow, I knew a young fellow there who was timekeeper in a shipyard. He was a very quiet, pleasant boy, so bashful that I used to wonder how he had ever summoned the courage to propose to the pretty Scotch girl who was his wife. As I got to know more of the pair, I divined the secret. Although poor, he was of good Glasgow parentage, while the wife had been a country girl so eager to get to the city that she had courted him while he was on a visit to the village in which she had lived. She had merely used him as a means for finding the life for which she had longed.

"How much he really loved her was never suspected until he came home one evening and found that she had run away with the youngest son of one of the proprietors of the shipyard.

"He learned within a week that they had sailed

for America. He packed a valise, took the money that he had saved, and started out.

" ' But where are you going to look for them? ' I asked him.

" ' To America,' he said, turning toward me, his face drawn and gaunt with the grief that he had survived.

" ' But America is a vast country.'

" ' I will hunt till I find her.'

" ' And when you find her — you will not kill her, surely! '

" ' I will try to get her to come back to me.'

" He took passage in the steerage, and I do not know what happened to him after that."

Each of us hid his emotions in his beer-mug. Then Max ordered fresh mugs, and said that Breffny's story recalled a somewhat similar thing that he had witnessed in Denver.

" When I was a reporter out there, I was standing one evening in front of a hotel. A crowd collected to see the body of a guest brought out and placed upon an ambulance.

" ' Where are you taking him, and what is it? ' I asked the driver.

" ' To the lazaretto. Smallpox.'

" For a moment, while he was being lifted into the ambulance, the victim's face was visible. A loud cry was heard in the crowd. It came from a ragged, wild-looking man, whose unkempt beard made him look much older than I afterward found him to be. As the ambulance hurried off, he ran after it, shouting:

" ' I must see that man! Stop! I must ask him something! '

" But he tripped upon a horse-car track, and when he had staggered to his feet, the ambulance was out of sight.

" I ran into the hotel and asked the clerk about the lazaretto patient. He was a young European — an Englishman — they thought, who had arrived from the East two days ago, and whose condition had just been discovered.

" Coming out, I went to the tramp who had cried out at the sight of the ill man. I found him seated on the curbstone, weeping like a child. I asked him why he wished to see the smallpox victim, and said that I could get him admission to the lazaretto, if he would tell me what he knew, and wouldn't let any other reporter have the story.

" He jumped up eagerly.

" ' It's this,' he said. ' That man ran away with

my wife, and I've hunted them over sea and land. This is the first sight I've had of him.'

"'Then,' I said, 'if you mean to harm him, I'm afraid I can't bring you to him.'

"'Him!' said the ragged man, disdainfully. 'I don't want to hurt him. I only want to find out where she is. I swear I wouldn't harm either of them.'

"I accompanied him to the city physician, with whom he had a long talk. That official finally promised to take him to the lazaretto. The doctor led the man to the side of the iron bed where the smallpox patient lay. The latter started like a frightened child at sight of his pursuer.

"'Remember,' said the doctor to the sick man, 'you have scarcely a chance for life. You would do well to tell the truth.'

"'Only tell me where she is,' pleaded the husband, 'and I'll forgive you all.'

"The sick man gasped:

"'I left her in Philadelphia — at the station. She had smallpox. It was from her I got it. I was a coward — a cur. I left her to save myself. The money I had brought from home was nearly all gone. Ask her to forgive me.'

"He was dead that evening. The husband was

then upon an east-bound freight-train. The newspaper telegraphed to Philadelphia, but nothing could be found out about the woman. I've often wondered what became of the man."

The loud hubbub of conversation, — nearly all in German, — the shouts of the waiters, the noise of their footfalls upon the stone floor, the sound of mugs being placed upon tables and of Max draining his " stein " of beer, bridged the hiatus between the ending of Max's narrative and the beginning of my own:

" Your story reminds me of one to which the city editor assigned me on one of my ' late nights.' I took a cab and went to the station-house. The case had been reported by a policeman at Ninth and Locust Streets, who had called for a patrol-wagon. From him I got the story. He had seen the thing happen.

" He was walking down Locust at half-past twelve that night, and was opposite the Midnight Mission, when his attention was attracted to the only two persons who were at that moment on the other side of the street. One was a man of the appearance of a vagabond, coming from Ninth Street. The other was a woman, who had come

from Tenth Street, and who seemed to walk with great difficulty, as if ready to sink at every step from weakness.

"The woman dropped her head as she neared the man. The man peered into her face, in the manner of one who had acquired the habit of examining the countenances of passers-by.

"The two met under the gas-lamp that is so conspicuous a night feature of the north side of Locust Street, between Ninth and Tenth.

"The woman gave no attention to the man. So exhausted was she that she leaned helplessly against the fence. The man ran forward, shrieking like a lunatic.

"'Jeannie!'

"The woman lifted her eyes in a dull kind of amazement and whispered:

"'Donald!'

"She fell back, but he caught her in his arms and kissed her lips a dozen times, with a half-savage gladness, crying and laughing hysterically, as women do.

"When the policeman had reached the pair, the woman had seen the last of this world.

"Afterward we found that she had been discharged from the municipal hospital, where she had been in the smallpox ward two weeks before;

and we surmised that she had virtually had nothing to eat since then.

"At the station-house the man explained that the woman was his runaway wife. He had started in search of her two years before, with no other clue as to her whereabouts than the knowledge that she had sailed for America with a man named Ferriss — "

"What?" cried Max. "Was the name Archibald Ferriss? That was the name of the man who died in the Denver lazaretto — "

But Max was stopped by Breffny, who almost shouted in excitement:

"And the name of the son of McKeown & Ferriss, of Glasgow, in whose shipyard was employed as timekeeper the Donald Wilson — "

"Donald Wilson was the name of the man who met his wife that night in front of the Midnight Mission," said I, in further confirmation.

It was remarkable. One of the three chapters of this tragic story had entered into the experience of each of us three who sat there emptying stone mugs. Now, for the first time, was the story complete to each of us.

"But what became of the man?" asked Breffny.

" When the police lieutenant spoke of having her body interred in Potter's Field, the husband spoke up indignantly. He brought forth two gold pieces, saying:

" ' I have the money for her grave. I saved this through all my wanderings, because I thought that when I should find her she might be homeless and hungry and in need.'

" So he had her buried respectably in the suburbs somewhere, and I was too busy at that time to follow up his subsequent movements. It is enough for the story that he found his wife."

NEWGAG THE COMEDIAN

XXIV

NEWGAG THE COMEDIAN

It was not his real name or his stage name, but it was the one under which he was best known by those who best knew him. It had been thrown at him in a café one night by a newspaper man after the performance, and had clung to him. Its significance lay in the fact that his "gags" — supposedly comic things said by presumably comic men in nominal opera or burlesque — invariably were old. The man who bestowed the title upon him thought it a fine bit of irony.

Newgag received it without expressed resentment, but without mirth, and he bore its repetition patiently as seasons went by. He was accustomed to enduring calmly the jests, the indignities that were elicited by his peculiar appearance, his doleful expression, his slow and bungling speech and movement, his diffident manner.

He was one of the forbearing men, the many

who are doomed to continual suffering of a kind that their sensitiveness and timidity make it the more difficult for them to bear.

Undying ambition burned beneath his undemonstrative surface; dauntless courage lay under his lack of ability.

He was an extremely spare man, of extraordinary height, and the bend of his shoulders gave to his small head a comical thrust forward. His black hair was without curl, and it would tolerate no other arrangement than being combed back straight. It was allowed to grow downward until it scraped the back of Newgag's collar, a device for concealing the meagreness of his neck.

He had a smooth, pale face, slanting from ears to nose like a wedge, and the dimness of the blue eyes added to its introspective cast. He blushed, as a rule, when he met new acquaintances or was addressed suddenly. He had a gloomy look and a hesitating way of speech. An amusing spectacle was his mechanical-looking smile, which, when he became conscious of it, passed through several stages expressive of embarrassment until his normal mournful aspect was reached.

As he usually appeared in a sack coat when off the stage, the length of his legs was divertingly emphasized. After the fashion of great actors of

a bygone generation, he wore a soft black felt hat, dinged in the crown from front to rear.

He had entered "the profession" from the amateur stage, by way of the comic opera chorus, and to that chance was due his being located in the comic opera wing of the great histrionic edifice. He had originally preferred tragedy, but the first consideration was the getting upon the stage by any means. Having industriously worked his way out of the chorus, he had been reconciled by habit to his environment, and had come to aspire to eminence therein. He had reached the standing of a secondary comedian, — that is to say, a man playing secondary comic rôles in the pieces for which he is cast. He was useful in such companies as were directly or indirectly controlled by their leading comedians, for there never could be any fears of his outshining those autocratic personages. Only in his wildest hopes did he ever look upon the centre of the stage as a spot possible for him to attain.

His means of evoking laughter upon the stage were laborious on his part and mystifying to the thoughtful observer. He took noticeable means to change from his real self. It mattered not what was the nature of the part he filled, he invariably assumed an unnatural, rasping voice;

he stretched his mouth to its utmost reach and lowered the extremities of his lips; he turned his toes inward (naturally his feet described an abnormal angle) and bowed his arms. Brought up in the school which teaches that to make others laugh one must never smile one's self, he wore a grotesquely lugubrious and changeless countenance. Such was Newgag in his every impersonation. When he thought he was funniest, he appeared to be in most pain and was most depressing.

"My methods are legitimate," he would say, when he had enlisted one's attention and apparent admiration across a table bearing beer-bottles and sandwiches. "The people want horse-play nowadays. But when I've got to descend to that sort of thing, I'll go to the variety stage or circus ring at once — or quit."

"That's a happy thought, old man," said a comedian of the younger school, one night, when Newgag had uttered his wonted speech. "Why don't you quit?"

Such a speech sufficed to rob Newgag of his self-possession and to reduce him to silence. He could not cope with easy, offhand, impromptu jesters. In truth, no one tried more than Newgag to excel in "horse-play," but his temperament or

his training did not equip him for excelling in it; he defended the monotony, emptiness, and toilsomeness of his humour on the ground that it was "legitimate."

One night Newgag drank two glasses of beer in rapid succession and looked at me with a touching countenance.

"Old boy," he said, in his homely drawl, "I'm discouraged! I begin to think I'm not in it!"

"Why, what's wrong?"

"Well, I've dropped to the fact that, after all these years in the business, I can't make them laugh."

I was just about to say, "So you've just awakened to that?" but pity and politeness deterred me. Every one else had known it, all these years. Newgag, to be sure, should naturally have been, as he was, the last to discover it.

Newgag thus went one step further than any comedian I have ever known. Having detected his inability to amuse audiences, he confessed it.

People who know actors and read this will already have said that it is a fiction, and that Newgag's admission is false to life. Not so; I am writing not about comedians in general, but about Newgag.

That he had come to so exceptional a concession

marked the depth of his despair. I tried to cheer him.

"Nonsense, my boy! They give you bad parts. Go out of comic opera. Try tragedy."

I had spoken innocently and sincerely, but Newgag thought I was jesting. Instead of his usual attempt at lofty callousness, however, he smiled that dismal, marionette-like smile of his. That gave me an idea, of which I said nothing at the time.

Several months afterward, a manager, who is a friend of mine, was suddenly plunged in distress because of the serious illness of an actor who was to fill a part in a new American comedy that the manager was to produce on the next night.

"What on earth shall I do?" he asked.

"Play the part yourself, as Hoyt does in such an emergency — or get Newgag."

"Who's Newgag?"

"He's a friend of mine, out of a position. I met him to-day very much frayed."

"Bring him to me."

Newgag was overwhelmed when I told him of the opportunity.

"I never acted in straight comedy," he said. "I can't do it. I might as well try to play Juliet."

" He wants you only to speak the lines, that's all. You're a quick study, you know. Come on! "

I had almost to drag the man to the manager. He allowed himself, in a semistupefied condition, to be engaged. He took the part, sat up all night in his boarding-house and learned it, went to rehearsal almost letter-perfect in the morning, and nervously prepared to face the ordeal of the evening.

At six o'clock, he wished to go to the manager and give up the part.

" I can never do it," he wailed to me. " I haven't had time to form a conception of it and to get up byplay. You see, it's an eccentric character part, — a man from the country whom everybody takes for a fool, but who shows up strong at the last. I can't — "

" Oh, don't act it. You're only engaged in the emergency, you know. Simply go on and say your lines and come off."

" That's all I can do," he said, with a dubious shake of the head. " If only I'd had time to study it! "

American plays had taken foothold, and this premier of a new one by an author of two previous successes drew a " typical first night audience." Newgag, having abandoned all idea of making a

hit, or of acting the part any further than the mere delivery of the speeches went, was no longer inordinately nervous. When he first entered he was a trifle frightened, and his unavoidable lack of prepared stage business made him awkward and embarrassed for a time. The awkwardness remained, but the embarrassment eventually passed away. He spoke in his natural voice and retained his actual manner. When the action required him to laugh, he did so, exhibiting his characteristic perfunctory smile.

He received a special call before the curtain after the third act. He had no thought that it was meant for him until the stage manager pushed him out from the wings. He came back looking distressed.

"Are they guying me?" he asked the stage manager.

The papers agreed the next day that one of the hits of the performance was made by Newgag "in an odd part which he had conceived in a strikingly original way, and impersonated with wonderful finish and subtle drollery."

"What does it mean?" he gasped.

I enlightened him.

"My boy, you simply played yourself. Did it never occur to you that in your own person you're

unconsciously one of the drollest men I ever saw? "

" But I didn't act! "

" You didn't. And take my advice — don't! "

And he doesn't. Upon the reputation of his success in that comedy he arranged with another manager to appear in a play especially written for him. He is a prosperous star now. Whatever his play or part he always presents the same personality on the stage and he has made that personality dear to many theatre-goers. He does not appear too frequently or too long in any one place; hence he is warmly welcomed wherever and whenever he returns. He is classed among leading actors, and the ordinary person does not stop sufficiently long to observe that he is no actor at all.

" This isn't exactly art," he said to me, the other night, with a tinge of self-rebuke. " But it's success."

And the history of Newgag is the history of many.

AN OPERATIC EVENING

XXV

AN OPERATIC EVENING

I

A Desperate Youth

THE second act of "William Tell" had ended at the Grand Opera House. The incandescent lights of ceiling and proscenium flashed up, showering radiance upon the vast surface of summer costumes and gay faces in the auditorium. The audience, relieved of the stress of attention, became audible in a great composite of chatter. A host streamed along the aisles into the wide lobbies, and thence its larger part jostled through the front doors to the brilliantly illuminated vestibule. Many passed on into the wide sidewalk, where the electric light poured its rays upon countless promenaders whose footfalls incessantly beat upon the aural sense. Scores of bicyclists of both sexes sped over the asphalt up and down, some

now and then deviating to make way for a lumbering yellow 'bus or a hurrying carriage.

Men and women, young people composing the majority, strolled to and fro in the roomy lobby that environs the auditorium on all sides save that of the stage. A group of enthusiasts stood between the rear door of the box-office and the wide entrance to the long middle aisle.

"How magnificently Guille held that last note!"

"What good taste and artistic sense Madame Kronold has!"

"Del Puente hasn't been in better voice in years."

"But you know, Mademoiselle Islar is decidedly a lyric soprano."

These were some of the scraps of the conversation of that group. A lithe, athletic-looking man of thirty stood mechanically listening to them, as he stroked his black moustache. He was in summer attire, evidently disdaining conventionalities, preferring comfort.

Suddenly losing interest in the conversation in his vicinity, he started toward the Montgomery Avenue side of the lobby, with the apparent intention of breathing some outside air at one of the wide-barred exits, where children stood looking

in from the sidewalk, and catching what glimpses they could of the audience through the doorways in the glass partition bounding the auditorium.

He by chance cast his glance up the unused staircase leading to the balcony from the northern part of the lobby. He saw upon the third step a young woman in a dark flannel outing-dress, her face concealed by a veil. She seemed to be watching some one among those who stood or moved near the Montgomery Avenue exits, which had wire barriers.

"By Jove!" he said, within himself, "surely I know that figure! But I thought she had gone to the Catskills, and I never supposed her capable of wearing negligee clothes at the theatre. There can be no mistaking that wrist, though, or that turn of the shoulders."

He stepped softly to her side and lightly touched one of the admired shoulders.

She turned quickly and suppressed an exclamation ere it was half-uttered.

"Why, Harry — Doctor Haslam, I mean! How did you know it was I?"

"Why, Amy — that is to say, Miss Winnett! What on earth are you doing here? Pardon the question, but I thought you were on the mountains. I'm all the more glad to see you."

While he pressed her hand she looked searchingly into his eyes, a fact of which he was conscious despite her veil.

"I'm not here — as far as my people may know. I'm at the Catskills with my cousins — except to my cousins themselves. To them I've come back home for a week's conference with my dressmaker. Our house isn't entirely closed up, you know. Aunt Rachel likes the hot weather of Philadelphia all summer through, and she's still here. When I arrived here this morning, I told her the dressmaker story. She retires at eight and she thinks I'm in bed too. But I'm here, and nobody suspects it but you and Mary, the servant at home, who knows where I've come, and who's to stay up for me till I return to-night. That's all of it, and now, as you're a friend of mine, you mustn't tell any one, will you?"

"But I know nothing to tell," said the bewildered doctor. "What does all this subterfuge, this mystery mean?"

Amy Winnett considered silently for a moment, while Doctor Haslam mentally admired the slim, well-rounded figure, the graceful poise of the little head with its mass of brown hair beneath a sailor hat of the style that "came in" with this summer.

"I may as well tell you all," she answered,

presently. "I may need your assistance, too. I can rely upon you?"

"Through fire and water."

"I've come to Philadelphia to prevent a suicide."

"Good gracious!"

"Yes. You see, I've broken the engagement between me and Tom Appleton."

"What! You don't mean it?"

There was a striking note of jubilation in the doctor's interruption. Miss Winnett made no comment thereupon, but continued:

"I finally decided that I didn't care as much for Tom as I'd thought I did, and then I had a suspicion — but I won't mention that —"

"No, you needn't. Your fortune — pardon me, I simply took the privilege of an old friend who had himself been rejected by you. Go on."

"Don't interrupt again. As I said, I concluded that I couldn't be Tom's wife, and I told him so. He went to the Catskills when we went, you know, as he thought he could keep up his law studies as well there as here. You can't imagine how he took it. I'd never before known how much he — he really wished to marry me. But I was unflinching, and at last he left me, vowing that he would return to Philadelphia and commit

suicide. He swore a terrible oath that my next message from him would be found in his hands after his death. And he set to-night as the time for the deed."

"But why couldn't he have done it there and then?"

"How hard-hearted you are! Probably because he wanted to put his affairs in order before putting an end to his life."

She spoke in all seriousness. Doctor Haslam succeeded with difficulty in restraining a smile.

"You don't imagine for a moment," he said, "that the young man intended keeping his oath."

"Don't I? You should have seen the look on his face when he spoke it."

"Well?"

"Well, I couldn't sleep with the thought that a man was going to kill himself on my account. It makes me shudder. I'd see his face in my dreams every night of my life. Then if a note were really found in his hands, addressed to me, the whole thing would come out in the newspapers, and wouldn't that be horrible? Of course I couldn't tell my cousins anything about his threat, so I invented my excuse quickly, packed a small handbag, disguised myself with Cousin Laura's hat and veil, and took the same train that

Tom took. I've kept my eye on him ever since, and he has no idea I'm on his track. The only time I lost was in hurrying home with my hand-bag to see my aunt, but I didn't even do that until I'd followed him on Chestnut Street to the down-town box-office of this theatre and seen him buy a seat, which I later found out from the ticket-seller was for to-night. So here I am, and there he is."

"Where?"

"Standing over there by that wire thing like a fence next the street."

The doctor looked over as she motioned. He soon recognized the slender figure, the indolent attitude of Tom Appleton, the blasé young man whom he was so accustomed to meeting at billiard-tables, in clubs, or hotels. A tolerant, amiable expression saved the youth's smooth, handsome face from vacuity. He was dressed with careful nicety.

"But," said Haslam, "a man about to take leave of this life doesn't ordinarily waste time going to the opera."

"Why not? He probably came here to think. One can do that well at the opera."

"Tom Appleton think? — I beg pardon again. But see, he's talking to a girl now, Miss Estabrook,

of North Broad Street. His smile to her is not the kind of a smile that commonly lights up a man's face on his way to death."

"You don't suppose he would conceal his intentions from people by putting on his usual gaiety, do you?" she replied, ironically; adding, rather stiffly, "He has at least sufficiently good manners to do that, if not sufficient duplicity."

"I didn't mean to offend you. My motive was to comfort you with the probability that he has changed his mind about shuffling off his mortal coil."

"You're not very complimentary, Doctor Haslam. Perhaps you don't think that being jilted by me is sufficient to make a man commit suicide."

"Frankly I don't. If I had thought so three years ago, I'd be dust or ashes at this present moment. It can't be that you would feel hurt if Tom Appleton there should fail to keep his oath and should continue to live in spite of your renunciation of him?"

"How dare you think me so vain and cruel, when I've taken all this trouble and come all this distance simply to prevent him from keeping his oath?"

"But how in the world would you prevent him if he were honestly bent on getting rid of himself?"

" By watching him until the moment he makes the attempt, and then rushing up and telling him that I'd renew our engagement. That would stop him, and gain time for me to manage so that he'd fall in love with some other girl and release me of his own accord."

" But think a moment. You can watch him until the opera is out and perhaps for some time later. But if he means to die he certainly has a sufficient share of good manners to induce him to die quietly in his own home. So he'll eventually go home. When his door is locked, how are you going to keep your eye on him, and how can you rush to him at the proper moment? "

" I never thought of that."

" No, you're a woman."

She proceeded to do some thinking there upon the stairs.

" Oh," she said, finally, " I know what to do. I'll follow him until he does go home, to make sure he doesn't attempt anything before that time, and then I'll tell the police. They'll watch him."

" You'll probably get Mr. Tom Appleton into some very embarrassing complications by so doing."

" What if I do," she said, heroically, " if I save

his life? Now, will you assist me to watch him? I'll need an escort in the street, of course."

"I put myself at your command from now henceforth, if only for the joy of the time that I am thus privileged to pass with you."

She smiled pleasantly, and with pleasure, trusting to her veil to hide the facial indication of her feelings. But Haslam's trained gray eye noted the smile, and also what kind of smile it was, and the discovery had a potent effect upon him. It deprived him momentarily of the power of speech, and he looked vacantly at her while colour came and went in his face.

Then he regained control of himself and he sighed audibly, while she dropped her eyes.

They were still standing upon the stairs, heedless of the confusion of vocal sounds that arose from the lobby strollers, from the boys selling librettos, from the people returning from the vestibule in a thick stream, from the musicians afar in the orchestra, tuning their instruments, from the many sources that provide the delightful hubbub of the entr'acte.

"Hush!" said Amy to Haslam. "Stand in front of me, so that Tom won't see me if he looks up here as he passes. He's coming this way."

Young Appleton, chaffing with the persons

whom he had met at the exit, was sharing in the general movement from the byways of the lobby to the middle entrance of the parquet. The electric bell in the vestibule had sounded the signal that the third act was to begin. Mr. Hinrichs had returned to the director's stand in the orchestra and was raising his baton.

Arrived at the middle entrance, Appleton raised his hat to those with whom he had been talking, as if not intending to go in just then.

Mr. Hinrichs's baton tapped upon the stand, the music began, and the curtain rose.

"Why doesn't he go in?" whispered Amy, alluding to Appleton.

But the young man yawned, looked at his watch, and departed from the lobby — not to the auditorium, but out to the vestibule.

"He's going to leave the theatre," said Miss Winnett, excitedly. "We must follow."

And she tripped hastily down the stairs, Haslam after her.

II

A Triangular Chase

Tom Appleton sauntered out through the great vestibule, turning his eyes casually from the

marble floor up to the balconies that look down from aloft upon this outer lobby. He was whistling an air from " Apollo " which he had heard a few weeks before at the New York Casino.

He hastened his steps when he saw a 'bus passing down Broad Street. A leap down the Grand Opera House steps and a lively run enabled him to catch the 'bus before it reached Columbia Avenue. He clambered up to the top and was soon being well shaken as he enjoyed the breeze and the changing view of the handsome residences on North Broad Street.

Haslam's sharp eyes took note of Appleton's action.

" He's on that 'bus," said the doctor to Amy as she took his arm on the sidewalk. " Shall we take the next one? "

" No; for then we can't see where he gets off. Can't we find a cab? "

" There's none in sight. We can have one called here, but we'll have to wait for it at least ten minutes."

" That will never do. To think he could elude us so easily, without even knowing that we're after him! "

Vexation was stamped upon the dainty face, with its soft brown eyes, as she raised her veil.

"Ah! I have it," said Haslam, who would have gone to great lengths to drive that vexation away.

"A bicycle! This section teems with bicycle shops. We can hire a tandem. It's a good thing we're both expert bicyclists."

"And that I'm suitably dressed for this kind of a race," replied Amy, as the two hurried down the block.

She stood outside the bicycle store and kept her gaze upon the 'bus, which was growing less and less distinct to the eye as it rolled down the street, while Haslam hastily engaged a two-seated machine.

The 'bus had not yet disappeared in the darkness when the pursuers, Amy upon the front seat, glided out from the sidewalk and down over the asphalt. The passage became rough below Columbia Avenue, where the asphalt gives away to Belgian block paving. Haslam's athletic training and the acquaintance of both with the bicycle served to minimize this disadvantage.

The frequent stoppages of the 'bus made it less difficult for them to keep in close sight of it. Conversation was not easy between them. Both kept silence, therefore, their eyes fixed upon the 'bus ahead, and carefully watching its every stop.

"You're sure he hasn't gotten off yet?" she asked, at Girard Avenue.

"Certain."

"He's probably going to his rooms downtown."

"Or to his club."

So they pressed southward. Before them stretched the lone vista of electric lights away down Broad Street to the City Hall invisible in the night.

The difficulty of talking made thinking more involuntary. Haslam's mind turned back three years. Was it, as he had dared sometimes to fancy, a juvenile capriciousness that had impelled this girl in front of him to reject him when she was seventeen, after having manifested an unmistakable tenderness for him? And now that she was twenty, and had in the meantime rejected several others, and broken one engagement, was it too late to attempt to revive the old spark?

His meditations were suddenly interrupted by an exclamation from the girl herself.

"Look! He's left the 'bus. He's going into the Park Theatre."

So he was. His slim person was easily distinguishable in the wealth of electric light that

flooded the street upon which looked the broad doorways and the allegorical façades of the Park.

The second act of "La Belle Hélène" was not yet over when Appleton entered and stood at the rear of the parquet circle. He indifferently watched the finale, made some mental comments upon the white flowing gown of Pauline Hall, the make-up of Fred Solomon, and the grotesqueness of the five Hellenic kings. Then he scanned the audience.

Haslam and Amy dismounted near the theatre and entrusted the bicycle to a small boy's care. When they had bought admission tickets and reached the lobby, the gay finale of the second act was being given. The curtain fell, was called up three times, and then people began to pour forth from the entrance to drink, smoke, or enjoy the air in the entr'acte.

Appleton was involved in the movement of those who resorted to the little garden with flowers and fountain and asphalt paving, accessible through the northern exits. He paused for a time by the fountain, not sufficiently curious to join the crowd that stood gaping at the apertures through which the members of the chorus could be seen ascending the stairs to the upper dressing-rooms, many of them carolling scraps of song from the opera as they went.

Appleton soon reëntered the lobby and again surveyed the audience closely. Haslam caught sight of him just in time to avoid him. Amy had resumed the concealment of her veil.

To the surprise of his watchers, Appleton left the theatre before the third act opened. Again he jumped upon a 'bus, but this time it was upon one moving northward.

"It looks as if he were going back to the Grand Opera House," suggested Amy, as she and her companion started to repossess the bicycle.

"His movements are a trifle unaccountable," said Haslam, thoughtfully.

"Ah! Now you admit he is acting queerly. Perhaps you'll see I was quite right."

Again mounted upon the bicycle, the doctor and the young woman returned to the chase. They were soon brought to a second stop by Appleton's departure from the 'bus at Girard Avenue.

"Where can he be going to now?" queried Amy.

"He's going to take that east-bound Girard Avenue car."

"So he is. What can he mean to do in that part of town?"

They turned down Girard Avenue. The car was half a block in advance of them.

"You're energetic enough in this pursuit," Amy shouted back to the doctor as the machine fled over the stones, "even if you don't believe in it."

"Energetic in your service, now and always."

She made no answer.

This time her reflections were abruptly checked — as his had been on Broad Street — by the cry of the other.

"See! He's getting off at the Girard Avenue Theatre."

Again they found a custodian for their bicycle and followed Appleton into a theatre.

The young man stopped at the box-office in the long vestibule, bought a ticket, and had a call made for a coupé. Then he passed through the luxurious little foyer, beautiful with flowers and soft colours, and stood behind the parquet circle railing.

Adelaide Randall's embodiment of "The Grand Duchess" held his attention for a time. Haslam and Miss Winnett, to avoid the risk of being discovered by him, sought the seclusion of the balcony stairs.

"We had a few bars of Offenbach at the Park,

and here we have Offenbach again," commented the doctor.

" And again, only a few bars, for there goes our man."

Appleton, having given as much attention to the few spectators as to the players, left the theatre and got into the cab that had been ordered for him.

Haslam, behind the pillar at the entrance to the theatre, overheard Appleton's direction to the driver. It was:

" To the Grand Opera House. Hurry! The opera will soon be over."

The cab rumbled away.

" It's well we heard his order," observed Haslam to Amy. " We couldn't have hoped to keep up with a cab. He'll probably wait at the Grand Opera House till we get there."

" But we mustn't lose any time, for, as he said, the performance will soon be over."

" Oh, ' Tell ' is a long opera and Guille will have an encore for the aria in the last act. That will give us a few minutes more."

III

A Telegraphic Revelation

A boy walking down Girard Avenue, as Appleton got into the cab, had been whistling the tune of "They're After Me," — a thing that was new to the variety stage last fall, but is dead this summer. The air, whistled by the boy, clung to Appleton's sense, and he unconsciously hummed it to himself as his cab went on its grinding way over the stones.

The cabman was considerate of his horse, and he coolly ignored Appleton's occasional shouts of, "Get along there, won't you?"

It was, therefore, not impossible for the bicyclists to keep in sight of the coupé.

"All this concern about a man you say you don't care for," said Haslam to Amy, as the bicycle turned up Broad Street. "It's unprecedented."

"It's only humanity."

"You didn't bother about following me around like this when you threw me over."

"You didn't threaten to kill yourself."

"No; if I had, I'd have carried out my threat.

But for months I endured a living death — or worse."

"Really? Did you, though?"

Eager inquiry and sudden elation were expressed in this speech.

"Of course I did. Why do you ask in that way?"

"Oh—you took me by surprise. Why did you never tell me it affected you so? I thought — I thought — "

"What did you think?"

"That if you really cared for me you would have — tried again."

"What? Then I was fatally ignorant! I thought that when you said a thing, you meant it."

"I didn't know what I meant until it was too late."

"But is it too late — ah! see, he's getting out of the cab at the Grand Opera House."

They quickly switched the bicycle from the street to the sidewalk, and both dismounted.

They were checked at the entrance to the theatre by the appearance of Appleton. He was coming from within the building, and with him were two women, one elderly and unattractive, the other a plump young person with bright blue

eyes in a saucy face that had more claim to piquant effrontery than to beauty. She was simply dressed and was all smiles to Appleton.

Amy and Haslam quickly turned their backs, thus avoiding recognition, and while they seemed to be looking through the glass front into the vestibule, they overheard the following conversation between the blue-eyed girl and Appleton.

"I'm glad you found us at last, Tom. Three acts of grand opera are about enough for me, thanks, and we'd have left sooner if your telegram that you'd be in town to-night hadn't made me expect to see you."

"Well, I've been hunting for you in every open theatre in town where there's grand opera. In your answer to my telegram from the Catskills, you said merely you were going to the opera this evening. You didn't say what opera, but I supposed it was this one, so I bought a ticket as soon as I arrived in town at the down-town office. I got here after the first act, and spent all the second act looking around for you."

"It's strange you didn't see us. We were in the middle of row K, right."

"Well, I missed you, that's all, and I kept a watch on the lobby after the act, thinking you'd perhaps come out between the acts. Then I went

to the Park Theatre, and then to the Girard Avenue."

Amy and Haslam went into the vestibule. Amy was crimson with anger. Haslam quietly said:

"Do you wish to continue the pursuit?"

Before she found time to answer, another matter distracted her attention.

"Look! There's Mary, the housemaid, who was to stay up for me till I got home. She has come here for me."

The servant stood by the door leading into the lobby, in a position enabling her to scan the faces of people coming out from the auditorium.

"Oh, Miss Amy, are you here? I was waiting for you to come out. Here's a telegram that came about a half-hour ago. I thought it might be important."

Amy tore open the envelope.

"Why," she said to Haslam, "this was sent to-day from Philadelphia to me at the Catskills, and my cousins have had it repeated back to me. And look — it's signed by you."

"I surely didn't send it."

But there was the name beyond doubt, "Henry Haslam, M. D."

"This is a mystery to me, I assure you," reiterated the doctor.

"But not to me," cried Amy. "Read the message and you'll understand."

He read these words:

"Mr. Appleton is very ill. His life depends upon his will-power. He tells me that you alone can say the word that will save him. Henry Haslam, M.D."

Haslam smiled.

A clever invention to make you think he tried to execute his threat. Now you know what he was doing while you were taking your hand-bag home. He probably concocted the scheme on his journey. But why did he sign my name, I wonder?"

She dropped her eyes and answered in a low tone:

"Because he knew that I would believe anything said by you."

"Would you believe that I love you still more than I did three years ago?"

"Yes; if it came from your own lips — not by telegraph."

She lifted her eyes now, and her lips, too; Mary the housemaid sensibly looked another way.

THE END.

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